

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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THE NOVEMBER "SMART SET"

The novelette which will open the next number of "The Smart Set" is a splendid society story of New York by a young writer whose pen is delightfully satirical and epigrammatic. The story is called

"The Game and the Candle," By Frances Davidge

A striking feature of the November issue will be a long humorous poem by

His Grace the Duke of Argyll

entitled "The Three Little Africanders." There will also be a poem by the Countess of Winchelsea, and excellent short stories from such writers as Kate Jordan, Ellis Parker Butler, James Huneker, Edna Kenton and Arthur Bartlett Maurice. The essay will be by Douglas Story, on "The Significance of Small-Talk," and John Kendrick Bangs, Frank Dempster Sherman, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Duncan Campbell Scott and others will contribute verse.

Beginning with the issue for December, "The Smart Set" will include as frontispieces the portraits of ladies distinguished in the societies of the world's great cities. Each number will contain one photo-drawing by a new process hitherto unattempted in magazine literature, and reproduced so as to give the finest artistic effect. The portrait for the December issue will be that of

The Duchess of Marlborough

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WHEN CUPID CAME TO NINE-BAR

By William R. Lighton

STEVE

DR. SIR:
Well Billy we are on the fall beef roundup now, so you better come down and get another squair feed of my cooking because Im at the old job yet every roundup. We are near done and will be at Spoon Butte by Thursday and Twelve Mile Slough Saturday god Willing. The boys all tell me to tell you come because its the same gang you knowed before and some more thats blowed in since instead of some thats gone, Red McGee and Blacks Jim with the Comickle eye and them from Coffeys and the P.K. outfit and the rest. You cant miss us by going to the Nine-Bar place and then keep agoing east by the creek trail and ask diferent ones. You come because we expect you sure.

From your Friend Respy,
STEVE.

As I try to figure it out, after the lapse of time, I think the story began with this letter.

I was loitering at Lusk, through days of wondrous sunlit content, when the letter came to me, across wide Wyoming spaces, crumpled and soiled by the hands and pockets of three relays of bearers. Of course I would go! For this Steve was known to me of old—a very half-god; and the "gang," too—as fine a lot of wildings as ever consorted together under the open sky. The place appointed lay forty miles from Lusk, somewhere in the vast, vague stretches to the south-east, with maybe two or three ranch houses set down at long intervals on the trail. Never mind; I would find it.

There was a long afternoon's ride in the saddle, within the cool, purple shadows of the granite Rawhide hills; then a long night's rest beneath the hospitable roof of Nine-Bar; then a

deflection at right angles eastward, out of the hills and over the measureless plain, with only the wire fences and the narrow ribbon of cottonwoods along the creek for company. Away and away to infinity on every side opened the low-rolling, incessant rangeland, dotted here and there in the middle distance by scattered bunches of cattle, grazing; the mighty arch of the sky was unstained by so much as a finger-mark of vapor on its immaculate blue; the air was an inexhaustible draft of rare and priceless cordial. Every sense was cloyed with sheer ecstasy. And far out in the heart of this empire of pure physical delight, nestled somewhere among the round swells of the earth, was the round-up camp.

It was well on to noon when I turned my pony out of the trail and to the summit of one of the bolder crests, for an exploring look around. Luck had been with me. Three miles away, at the foot of the long slope, I saw the thin skeleton of a windmill, a bunch of ponies shut within a rope corral, and nearby—a mere pin-point of white in the brown waste—the canvas-topped mess-wagon. Where the mess-wagon was there Steve would be; so I urged the laggard pony to make haste, while a delicious, warm shiver of gladness went over me.

But things were going wrong with Steve. That was plain to me even before I pulled up and slid from the saddle. From afar I had beheld his towering figure bending over the dough-board at the back of the wagon, and I had sent a joyous shout to him across five hundred yards of cactus-

grown sand. In his right mind Steve would have thundered a response fit to thrill the heart of a wayfarer; but, though our last meeting was two years gone, his only answer to my hail was to lift and wave one bare and brawny arm, white to the elbow with biscuit dough. His big outdoor voice was silent.

"Well, Steve!" I cried, as my feet found the ground, and I put out my hands to lay hold upon him; then held back, wondering. There seemed to be no way to get at him through the dough, which enveloped him like a mantle. Dough was on his faded overalls; dough wellnigh obscured the front of his blue flannel shirt; a long, thick smear of it was on the up-tilted brim of his wide hat, and a fat white blob clung stickily over his right eye. As he straightened from his task a welcoming light shone in the depths of his fine eyes, but his lips were a straight, angry line.

"It's a fly, Billy," he said, answering my look, and there was in his voice a note of almost tearful exasperation; "just a common little old misbegotten Wyoming fly. She come an' set on my face the minute I poured the water in the flour, an' I've been slappin' at her ever since. I've wasted a man's feed of biscuit on her. Say, my six-shooter's layin' under the corner of that tarp'. Get it an' kill the son-of-a-gun for me."

I sat down on a roped roll of blankets and laughed, while he stood over me, his arms uplifted helplessly, a frown upon his handsome, bronzed face.

"Seems right funny to you, don't it?" he said; and would have said more, no doubt, but that the pure air became suddenly freighted with a smell—the thick, reeking smell of burning cookery. Steve leaped to the row of Dutch ovens that squatted half buried in their trough in the sand, nested in fire, and lifted one of the lids. The smell belched out in a smothering cloud.

He drew back, gathering his strength, then delivered a kick that sent the

fat-bellied kettle rolling a dozen yards, strewing the sand with a steamy, gummy mess.

"Now will you look!" he said with an ominous smoothness. "There's six good gallons of spotted pup, plumb ruined, an' the last forsooken raisin I've got in the forsooken grub-box!"

His ire strengthened as he eyed the wreck, and he swung his long arms aloft in a gesture of denunciation.

"That's what comes of trustin' a Swede!" he cried with hot disgust. "I worked an hour overtime yesterday, down at Spoon Butte, cuttin' cottonwood to bring up to the Slough, an' we put it on the other wagon, that that Swede Nick's a-drivin', an' I ain't saw him since I pulled out o' there at sun-up. Nobody but a Swede could've missed the trail up here. But he's done it, an' I had to make my fire with sagebrush—hot as Down Below one minute, an' freeze you stiff the next. I wish I had that Swede here."

But duty was stronger upon him than his private grievance.

"I've got to fix another mess right quick," he said. "The boys ain't had it for a good spell, an' they wanted it."

A new grief beset him when he stirred the tangled contents of the grub-box. "No raisins, to begin with," he grumbled; then, with rising voice as each item became plain to him: "Half-pint o' condensed milk, with a quart o' sand in it! Two eggs, an' one of 'em rattles!" He slammed the lid shut with a smash, and his eyes, as he faced about, had a fiery shine. It was plain that words were welling from the deeps of his soul; but he choked them back.

"I ain't got time to say it!" he flashed. Then, after a moment: "Look down yonder. There's some kind of a critter at the windmill tank. If she's a cow, an' if she ain't plumb dry—Say Billy, is your pony rope-wise?"

"He'll do," I answered.

On the instant Steve swung his elastic length into the saddle, his feet feeling for the stirrups, his hands active with the coils of a noosed rope. The trained pony answered the pressure of the man's knees and swung into a gal-

lop, charging down upon the cow at the windmill.

She was a huge, gaunt, brindled beast, long-horned, long-legged—built like an athlete. She seemed to divine the unusual, for after one brief, wild-eyed stare at the flying horseman she hoisted head and tail and set off across the sand at a round trot that speedily grew into a loose, rolling lope, while with every jolting plunge she vented a deep-voiced bellow, half a frightened bleat and half a roar of challenge.

She might as well have saved her breath. Steve's practiced arm swung free and the circling rope flew forward and settled. Then followed a quick turn of the end around the saddle-horn, an obedient bracing of the pony's legs to meet the shock, a snap of the rope, a careening, forward dive, and the cow was down—kicking, struggling, noisy with rage, but helplessly down, with the noose drawn fast about both hind feet, and with a skilful giant at the other end of the rope, keeping it strained taut.

"Oh, Billy!" Steve shouted. "Bring one o' them lard buckets out the back o' the wagon. Get a move on!"

I got a move on.

"You take the saddle an' hold her till I see what she's got," he said, and I did as I was bidden. "There's milk here!" he called, as he bent over the fallen brute. "Ease off a little, an' let her get her feet."

She stood up as the lariat slackened and became at once a mad whirlwind of horns, hoofs, stiffened tail and blotched hide, whose details the eye could catch only as a promiscuous blur. It was a good five minutes before she gave an angry, breathless grunt of exhaustion and seemed to yield to the inevitable. Cautiously Steve approached, stooping over and stretching his hand to her udder. The unaccustomed touch electrified her with new life and fire. Though I did my best, somehow she got one foot free of the noose, and then she kicked.

Now, when a range cow kicks it is no mere mild, well-bred Delsarte movement of family-Jersey gentleness, half

a caress; it is a real kick, thought out with care and delivered with diabolic exactness and sledgehammer force. That was the sort of kick Steve got; and there was a spraddling patch of prickly pear where he lit after a hard, backward fall.

Slowly, without a word, he picked himself up; and, with never a glance aside at the cow, at me or at aught else, he marched stiffly back to the wagon. I cast the noose free and let the brute go, then rode to join him where he stood over his dough-board, a statue of impotent, smothering wrath. I knew him so well that I elected to wait a bit before breaking in upon his meditations. Laughter was choking me, but I dared not let it out. The brush fire about the Dutch ovens had died to mere embers, and I replenished it with armfuls of sage; then I brought full buckets of water from the windmill. After that I sat down and rolled a cigarette, taking plenty of time to it. Still he gave no sign.

"Where are the boys working, Steve?" I questioned presently, struggling to hold my mirth in check. He gave a jerk of his thumb to the southward, where, two miles away, the brown hills swelled to meet the flawless sky. I waited until he had set his biscuit over the blaze and was measuring out his coffee before I tried further speech.

"Did she hurt you, Steve?" I asked.

"No, she didn't hurt me, Steve!" he flared back. "Don't you be so anxious. Don't you reckon I know enough to holler when I'm hurt? Say!"

It was of no use; I had to laugh then. An insane ecstasy seized me, and I lay back and let it have its way. Momently I expected to feel the grip of his sinewy fingers at my throat; but I was hysterically happy. When the spasm had died away in breathless gurglings and I sat up and wiped the blinding tears from my eyes, the giant was grinning sheepishly, half mollified.

"Let her keep her old brindled milk," he growled. "I wouldn't have it now if she'd come an' squirt it in the bucket. But I'm sure sorry the boys ain't goin'

to have no puddin', after they'd counted on it." He gave a backward squint over his shoulder at the sun. "One o'clock," he said. "Somethin's keepin' 'em. But they'll be comin' along right soon. There, that's them now!"

Over the round brow of a hill, a full mile away, there rose into view the figure of a horseman, sharply silhouetted against the limpid background of blue; then two more; then half a dozen; then a score, coming like the wind, riding as none can on earth but those strong and fearless sons of the wilderness. Lusty hunger was urging them, and they charged down the long slope with utter abandon—flapping elbows held high, stooped bodies sinuously yielding, wide hat-brims flung back by the rush of the wind, loosened reins flying free, buoyant fearlessness enveloping them like an atmosphere—an inspiring sight. But for the mad tattoo of the rushing four-score hoofs, they would have appeared as creatures of the air rather than of the earth. I stood up and swung my hat for gladness, and across the intervening space came a chorus of shrill yells—speech of the comradeship of Cowland. In another moment they had whirled down upon us, flinging themselves from their seats ere the ponies had come to a stand, and instantly engrossed in the frenzied contest of stripping off saddles and accoutrements from the work-worn beasts, whose day's labor was over. It was a point of honor that that duty be attended to and the animals set adrift to graze before a word was spoken in greeting.

But there were words in plenty afterward; words that warmed the soul with their honest, frank friendliness, backed by the straining grip of muscular, gauntleted fists. In the years past we had shared together in many things, and the long gap since our last parting had been filled with the crowding events that make up the sum of men's lives out West. They were of all sorts, those cowmen, from good to bad; but in that moment I loved them all mightily.

A sound broke in upon our talk—the sound of an iron spoon pounding upon an iron kettle, and Steve's summons:

"Come an' get it!"

It was the dinner call; and in twenty seconds we were squatted cross-legged in a circle on the sand, heaped tin plates balanced on our knees, and empty stomachs yearning over the rich, steamy odors. Maybe the pampered gods in their own domain have eaten better dinners than that; but they will have to prove it, under oath. Speech was abated for a time, while tongues had other occupation; but presently Black's Jim cocked his "comickle eye" over the busy group, chuckling.

"Children, come an' see the animals feedin'!" he cried; then, with the manner of a philosopher: "Say, I can tell more about a man by watchin' him feed for a spell than by listenin' to what he thinks about religion. D'you ever notice that? Look at Red McGee doin' magic—makin' that chunk o' bull beef invisible!"

"If only the things that are unseen really were eternal," I hinted; but Red repelled the hint with heat.

"I'm darn glad they ain't," he said. "Think o' never needin' another dinner!"

"That's the way it's goin' to be in heaven," Jim reminded him.

"Is it?" Red retorted. "Then you can have my seat; it's no good to me."

Jim's attention was diverted by something his roving eye saw. "Look yonder!" he said.

The missing second wagon had come into view, crawling heavily out of the distance. It was not following any trail, but was bumping and jolting across the untracked plain; showing itself for a brief time on the crest of a hill's uplift, then dipping out of sight into a shallow trough, to reappear presently, getting nearer by almost imperceptible degrees. Jim grinned broadly over the rim of his tin coffee-cup.

"Here comes old Sweden," he said with velvet mildness. "Ain't he the faithful one? Went wobblin' off the trail again, didn't he?"

Steve was frowning darkly. "When he gets sent to hell, after a while, he'll have to be showed which way is down," he growled, and held the remainder of his thoughts in abeyance until the tardy wagon crept up to the camp and halted. The driver, a big, blond oaf of a fellow, sat grinning down upon us with an ox-like calm.

"I guess mebbe I got lost," he hazarded blandly, and made no move to leave his seat.

"Well, you're found," Steve grumbled. "Now get down. Are you waitin' to be told grub's ready?"

The fellow descended, letting his team stand. Picking a plate from the stack beside the ovens, he began filling it.

"You put that down an' 'tend to them hawsses," Steve admonished him sternly.

"I guess mebbe I eat my grub, first place," the Swede returned stolidly, lifting successive lids.

"You heard me!" Steve said, and put aside his own half-finished dinner, gathering his muscular shanks under him. But the other would not heed the obvious warning.

"I don't see no puddin'," he complained in his high, nasal whine. "You was goin' to fix some puddin'. I ban thinkin' about puddin' all the way up. An' now there hain't none."

On the instant Steve was upon him with a tigerish spring, his powerful arms locked about the thick body, his feet busy with a wrestler's catch. On even terms they would have been fairly matched; but ere the Swede could use his surprised and sluggish wits he was sprawling at his length, with Steve his master.

"I'll show you some puddin'!" the irate giant roared, and dragged the prone body by main strength to where the wrecked "spotted pup" lay, grimy with sand and swarming with hungry flies. "There's puddin'! Help yourself." He caught his great hands in the fellow's flaxen mane and pushed the blond and startled face plump to the ears in the slimy mess, holding it there, churning it up and down ro-

bustly until he was tired. Then he jerked the Swede over on his back and sat upon him.

"Have some more!" he thundered. "There's plenty. You ain't deprivin' nobody. Eat faster. Lemme give you another helpin'. Take all you want." And with every snappy sentence he was firing scooped handfuls of the stuff with nice aim into the upturned face—now plugging the gaping mouth full; then closing the wide, staring eyes with a thick smear; even crowding a generous portion inside his victim's flannel shirt bosom; filling his hat crown and pulling it down with a jerk over his ears and working such other satanic indignities as his angered fancy could contrive, until the prostrate form had ceased to struggle and the head and face were hidden beneath a smothering mound. Then Steve helped him to his feet with a mighty heave.

"Now let's hear you say 'puddin','" he challenged. "An' now you go 'tend to them hawsses. Understand?"

And somehow, through the blinding, choking plaster of rice and raisins, the poor chap understood and went obediently, tamely, to do as he was bidden, while Steve, his long-pent passion seething within him, squared his great shoulders, set his thumbs in his belt and began to deliver himself.

Angry invective I had heard, many times, from the tongues of masters, but nothing like this. Perhaps you have seen a geyser, when near irruption, provoked to an abnormal fury by a stone dropped down its sputtering throat. That is faintly like Steve's upheaval. It began with the Swede Nick in particular, widening in sweeping circles until it included all his hapless compatriots the whole world over. Then it came back to the camp on Twelve Mile and began again, touching briefly upon puddings and their inventors and perfectors; broadening to take in the art of cookery, past, present and future; the makers of mess-wagons; the breeders and tenders of cattle; the exigencies of politics which had brought Wyoming into being, and the whole

order of latter day economics which impelled men to labor for their daily bread. Item by item he named and condemned these things; then, lest he might have forgotten something, he voiced a wild, inclusive anathema upon the Great Scheme, from Twelve Mile to the farthest star. When he had finished there remained nothing to be said. What made the performance the more notable was the fact that Steve was not used to swearing. His everyday speech was of a lamb-like mildness.

And on an everyday occasion the boys would have enjoyed this fervid spectacle beyond measure, and the ornate ingenuity of Steve's periods would have been hailed with jocund approval. But clearly this was no common time. Nobody laughed. They looked on with grave decorum; gravely they heard him through; and at the last they got up from their places quietly, saddled fresh horses from the corral and rode away into the sunlit afternoon.

II

A TOUCH OF NATURE

WHEN they were gone Steve stood for a little time erect, grim-lipped, of implacable front; then, swift and faint as heat lightning below the far horizon on a summer evening, a smile flickered in his eyes and his passion was gone.

"Gawd, Billy!" he drawled, a lazy calm in his voice, "I'm right ashamed. I ain't had one o' them spells since the time the new bull caught me afoot in the south pasture last spring an' run me into the creek an' kep' me there a plumb hour up to my neck, right where that lower spring comes out. Cold! Oh, hush! Talk about your plain an' fancy, sacred an' profane swearin'! You ought to heard me. I fair raised a smoke off the creek. It must have seemed comical to the bull."

He came and sat down beside me, with easy indolence, and made ready for his after-dinner cigarette. When it was lit he lay back against the rolls

of blankets, basking in the golden warmth, a light of peace in his dark eyes that were amusedly watching Swede Nick.

The poor fellow was having a hard time of it, blundering about in the fog which recent happenings had conjured in his childlike understanding. The crust of pudding upon his head annoyed him greatly, as he went about his work, freeing his team of their harness. It was a long ten minutes before he got them clear and drove them down to drink at the tank; and, while they sucked greedily at the sun-warmed water, Nick plunged in his head, making a casual toilet by mopping away the worst of the clinging rice. Steve laughed softly, half under his breath.

"The trouble with a Swede is that he don't give his mind exercise enough to keep the fat worked off," he said whimsically. "I can't seem to keep peaceful with them kind. What I like, Billy, in a man I've got to mix with regular is one o' them buckin' minds—one that can go straight up in the air an' come down stiff-legged when anything happens, an' sort o' let you know it's around an' up-an'-a-comin'. But think o' havin' to live somewhere where there wasn't none but the Swede kind! Wouldn't that ravel you out?"

Nick came plodding back up the hill to camp, wiping the dripping water from his face upon his shirt sleeves, and began at once to pick up the scattered dishes for washing.

"Eat your dinner first, Nick," Steve suggested with a curious gentleness; and, like one in a trance or like a mechanical toy at the end of a string, the man started stolidly to obey. When he had eaten and had finished his task with the dishpan he sat down apart, occupying himself for the rest of the afternoon by picking dried flakes and crumbs of pudding out of his hair.

There was still a clear hour before the preparation of supper must begin. At other times Steve would have found work to do; but on this day he dallied, indulging the luxury of speech with a friend. Then it was that, as a subtle

after-effect of the troubled morning, and as a subtle forerunner of the troubles that were to come, he spoke freely of what was in his heart.

"I don't aim to let folks see me actin' up, times when I get one o' them snorts on me," he said, referring back with persistent apology to his noon-time outburst. "But seemed like I couldn't get around it today, somehow. I've felt it comin', days an' days. I've been plumb wore out with myself, an' my job, an' the outfit, an' the cow business, an' sagebrush, an' canned stuff. What's the use? You tell me that, Billy, because I don't know." He sat for a long minute, staring soberly over the empty plain and up into the vast void of the sky. "I don't know," he repeated presently. "I been thinkin' about it a heap this summer, but I don't seem to get no closter to nowhere. It's beginnin' to worry me some. Looks to me like when a man gets to be twenty-seven, he ought to be figurin' on pickin' out a trail for himself that goes somewhere. I don't seem to hit it. I'm just millin' round, like a calf in a brandin' corral. I got steady work an' I'm gettin' ahead some; I got thirty head o' cows o' my own off on the open range somewhere, an' a good bunch o' yearlin's an' two-year-olds, besides this year's calves; an' I got me a claim over on Nigger Baby Creek, with water right. I ain't took but one little, lonesome drunk all summer. I been behavin' so undecently proper it makes me blush to think about it. 'Tain't that. *That* ain't what makes livin'."

His cigarette had gone out. He began a slow search for a match, scratched it slowly upon his boot heel and sat absently watching the flame until it crept up and scorched his fingers. He flung the cigarette from him and turned to face me, a vagrant tinge of red showing beneath his tan, an unaccustomed hint of shyness in his eyes.

"Billy," he said very gently, "I reckon the trouble is I'm gettin' lonesome for a home. I'm tired rangin' it. A home! A real home—mine, with a real woman in it—my wife, and—and

somebody else, mebbe, that would grow up to call me—oh, hell, you know!"

He lay back at his full, agile length upon the sand, flinging out his strong arms, coloring furiously now, as with a delicious shame. His mood was a revelation—the disclosure of another and unsuspected soul lurking deep within the careless, happy, jocund deviltry of the Steve I had known—this bold, lusty son of the saddle, in whose everyday creed sentiment was listed as one of the lesser crimes. I thought I caught what he would discover to me.

"Who is she, Steve?" I asked. "Do I know her?"

His answering laugh made an escape for his embarrassment. "Who is she?" he mocked. "Listen at you! If I knowed who she was, do you reckon I'd be losin' time here cookin' for this outfit an' talkin' to you? Would that be me? If I knowed who she was, wouldn't I be takin' a whole lot of awful quick steps whichever way she was a-goin'? You better not ask no more o' them kind o' questions till you stop to remember me. But you can ease off your mind; I don't know her, an' I don't reckon I ever will. Women like I mean don't run around loose in the brush, places like this."

His tone offered a dismissal of the theme; but I was loath to lose sight of this new aspect of the man.

"You're not trying to tell me that you've never loved a woman?" I said.

He flashed a look upon me, his fine eyes kindling with changeable lights—light of laughter, light of robust, splendid youth, and light of crowding memories. As if in answer, he caught up a handful of fine sand and let it escape slowly from his lax fingers.

"Love!" he echoed in a soft, deep drawl; and there was a quality in his voice like the passionate purr of a lion over his mate, or like the pulsing murmur of a humid June night, when all the world is languorous with the sheer mystery and ecstasy of living. "Oh, Billy, hush! My sinful soul! Why, don't I love even the place where a woman has stood, as much as a week ago? I've loved 'em in whole bunches

at a time, all the way from Yuma to Chicago, an' all the dif'rent kinds the good Lord ever made. But that ain't the way I mean. That's just the natural-born man of me. I've always forded through them spells, like through low water in a creek."

He paused abruptly, considering; then went back over his words, as though on afterthought they carried more meaning than he knew. "Forded through! I reckon right there's the difference. Places where you can ford through the water ain't turrible deep nor swift, so you don't risk nothin'—only, mebbe, quicksand. I tell you," he laughed, with a frank and full return to his dominant humor of rollicking irresponsibility, "here's the way it is: I'm just goin' to keep on a-lovin' every woman I meet up with, same as I been doin'—sort o' feelin' how deep the water is, till after while, mebbe, I'll wade in somewhere an' hit a place where it's comin' down bank-full, like from a cloudburst up in the hills, an' that swift it'll throw me plumb off my feet an' carry me head over heels, so I ain't able to help myself. The woman that does that way with me she can sure have little old Steve for her'n, an' I don't care who she is, nor who she's been, nor where she belongs, nor nothin'."

"But, Steve," I said—not very brilliantly, it will be seen—"this part of Wyoming is full of nice girls."

A mild scorn came upon him. "Nice girls!" he said after me, with the air of finding the words flat and stale and without flavor. "Yes, that's awful true. You couldn't say anything truer. An' the men will keep on cuttin' the likeliest ones out o' the herd, to make wives of. That's true, too. An' I reckon they'll average up sort o' half-an'-half, don't-care satisfied, an' raisin' big families to help settle the country, when they've growed up respectable. That's all right; you don't hear me barkin' at it. But that ain't me. Shucks! I've saw a heap o' that business of tryin' to ketch the wife you want on the draw, an' it's wised me up. It's like drawin' to fill

a bobtail flush—an' there's a sight of heartbreak in them bobtails, if you happen to have all your chips on the table."

He got to his feet, shaking off his grave humor as he brushed the clinging sand from his overalls. "Well, there! I've been talkin' some more," he laughed. "But I'm blowed if I don't more'n half mean it. It'll be experience, anyway; an' the way I look at it, 'most any kind of experience is cheap at the price. An' they say, after you get started once, there ain't no cure for experience except more experience. Looks as if I'm in for it, don't it? Now, you amuse yourself a while," he added brusquely, his voice falling to the even level of humdrum duty. "I got to start supper."

It was a very prosaic task that called him—that of preparing food for a full score of ravenous, healthy appetites. As I watched him, his strong hands dexterously busy with his can-opener, his potato-knife and his interminable biscuits, there was no least sign upon him, no faintest trace of what had passed. He had suddenly become again the camp cook, earning his forty dollars a month and apparently giving his whole mind to it. Now and then, in a breathing interval, he gave me a word or two of jovial gossip from the wide neighborhood, or a brief, broad narrative of some of the things that had come to pass since last I had hobnobbed with the "gang." He did not once recur, even remotely, to his heart-theme; that he seemed to regard as a tune that is played.

III

"HEART-ARROWS"

THE boys were late again in coming to their supper; for the round-up was nearing its end, and every minute of daylight counted. But the waiting was no hardship while mind and soul could feast upon the majestic processional of the matchless day.

The dazzling glory of noon, flooding the plain from horizon to horizon till it brimmed over with pure brilliance, had carried a vague promise of immortality in its breathless, pulseless tranquillity; the day had seemed to be made, not of passing hours, but of mere shining duration, immeasurable, endless. Yet as I lay outstretched, every sense sated with sheer content, suddenly I was made aware of a change, intangible as a dream within a dream, that fell as it seemed within the space of a heart-beat. It was as though the golden vapor of sunlight had begun to lift from the earth, passing ethereally upward, light as thought, into the deep dome of the sky; and in its place there came, not a shadow, but the faintest shadow of a shadow, that was felt rather than seen. On the instant the velvet warmth, too, grew immaterially less. That seems so poor in the saying, though it was so real and wondrous in the happening. Proofs there were none for the senses; yet the soul perceived that the radiant splendor of the perfect day was dimmed. The wide plain felt it; for the slender stalks of the dried range grasses shivered with a tremor of sound like the rustle of ghostly garments, though no breath of wind had touched them, and they were motionless before the eye. Then, coming from nowhere, tints of violet and royal purple began flowing into the deeper hollows—mere breathless whispers of color, drifting, drifting, till the vales overflowed with soft opalescence; and before I knew it the flames of the camp-fire were casting flickering shadows, in open rebellion against the declining sun. There was no more doubt about it; the day was done.

By and bye, when all the world was invested with the dusk, the boys returned. This time there was no mad fury in their approach; they came temperately, slowly, oppressed by a weight of weariness after the stress of the long day with the herd. They were mightily hungry, too, and short of temper as they went about their first evening tasks. Where I, lazily

loafing, saw romance, they saw only commonplace, prosaic duty, fit to fret a man's soul out with its pestiferous, dull details. It was not until supper was safely put away and a haze of tobacco smoke was in the still, cool air that their grouchy humors were abated and an angelic mildness descended upon them for a brief hour.

They took their respite variously. Some lolled at their length upon the sand near the evening fire, in full-fed silence, half drowsing, feeling the luxurious thrill of rest in their tired bodies, rousing only now and then when a fresh cigarette was needed; some were busy with bits of stitching on broken bridles or torn raiment; Red McGee held a paper-bound novel upon his bandy, chap-clâd knees, following the thrilling lines with pudgy finger and squinting eyes, wholly absorbed. But Black's Jim, his mismatched eyes cocked two ways for mischief, knew no concern of his own, busying himself instead with an irrepressible fire of broad-tempered badinage, aimed promiscuously, as his light fancy prompted. Most of it found a sure mark, but none of it made any deep hurt.

"How's alfalfa at the P.K. place this fall, Ben?" he asked of one of the loungers. He put a casual innocence into the question; but the words appeared to carry a hidden meaning, for Ben grinned foolishly.

"Aw, that's gettin' old," he retorted, stirring in his resting-place. "Let up."

"I'll bet there's half here that ain't heard it yet," Jim returned. "D'you know about Ben in the alfalfa last spring, boys? It was when they was makin' the first cuttin', an' Ben was drivin' the machine. There was a right smart bunch of girls up visitin' from Cheyenne, an' Ben he was a-showin' off with a new-broke team, drivin' fancy an' careless, till he run into a bees' nest. You know how the seats o' them machines is made—kind o' openwork, like a lady's drop-stitch sock. There's where the bees saw Ben first, an' they dove for him. Well, sir, they say the girls enjoyed

themselves mighty well, till the team broke through the fence an' went down the bluff into the creek, an' then they had to h'ist Ben up out o' the mud with a rope."

"More different every time you tell it," Ben commented, with the air of dismissing the theme; but the joker was not yet done.

"That P.K. alfalfa's sure givin' Ben lots o' chances to use his mind," he said. "There was the time he turned them Hereford cows in on the creek piece, to pasture, an' let 'em eat too much, so they all swelled up an' had to be stuck. An' then Ben, he done it again, next week—twicet more, till he got plumb wore out with frettin' over 'em. Know what he done? Next time it happened he fixed some o' these here little tin whistles in the holes, so after that he didn't have nothin' to do but listen, an' when the cows had eat enough, they'd begin to blow their whistles for him to come an' drive 'em out. Saved a heap o' trouble; only now he's trainin' one o' the dogs to go when they begin to toot."

"Aw!" Ben said again, trying to affect weariness. But a new diversion came to his relief. From out the deep hollow of the darkness to the westward sounded a shrill hail, and presently The Boss from the Nine-Bar ranch rode in and flung himself to the ground, come to see how things had gone on the round-up, and to bring a month's accumulation of mail for the boys. With this they were busy for a little time, but not for long; the postal service made but a small part of the lives of these wildlings. The bag was emptied in a promiscuous heap upon the sand beside the fire, and each man helped himself. Two or three had letters from friends or kinsfolk; a few others had circulars presenting the merits of a new thing in saddles, or smoking tobacco, or fire-arms, or some other item of the furniture of Cowland; and besides, there was a goodly stack of newspapers, coming from those far and various corners of the earth which these punchers had

once called Home. They were silent and preoccupied as they felt again that light touch of contact with the remote outer world; and meanwhile The Boss sat in interested speech with the foreman of the round-up, discovering how his beasts had fared through the long summer on the open range, and what the prospects were for the fall shipments to the stockyards at Omaha.

Presently Black's Jim ran his vagrant eye over the unclaimed bits remaining.

"A paper for little old Steve," he remarked. Steve was at his dough-board, doing things for the morning's breakfast, and paying no attention to the fireside idlers; so with a friendly license Jim pulled the paper from its wrapper and unfolded it. In a moment his brown, good-humored face was impishly alight.

"Heart-Arrows!" he read from the title line. "'A Journal Devoted to the Interests of Matrimony'! An' it come to our Steve! Now don't that sour the milk? 'Devoted to the Interests of Matrimony'!"

Steve was too busy to hear or heed, and Jim spread the printed sheet flat upon the sand and fell into intent silence, while he pored over the close-printed columns of seductive advertisements from all sorts and conditions of men who wanted wives, and divers and sundry women who wanted husbands—the old, old and familiar tale. Now and again, when a specially delectable morsel turned up, Jim would spell it out aloud, rolling it upon his tongue with keen relish.

"Just listen!" he commented. "All the men's young an' han'some, an' all the women's rich an' good-tempered. Wouldn't you wonder that them kind don't never meet up with each other? Seems right curious to me. But they never do, do they? They keep right on marryin' the same old wrong ones, same as they've always done. I reckon that must be human. Why, even old Adam, when he didn't have but one to choose from, *he* picked out the wrong one, didn't he? Seems like a man can't help it, nohow."

Suddenly he interrupted his philo-

sophic musings with a joyful yelp, sitting erect, his face shining with delight.

"Steve!" he cried. "Our little Steve! Boys, will you listen at this!" And he read aloud with gurglings and chokings of mirth:

"Wyoming cattleman wants the girls to write to him, to kill lonesomeness of a big country and few folks. Twenty-seven years old and right healthy and been considered fair to middling for looks by different women. Has two sections of land and some cows and not quarrelsome. Might marry if the right one found but don't hardly expect to find her, so girls don't get too serious but just friendly. Send photograph if you are pretty but not otherwise because I can look at that kind here plenty if I want to. Will answer all friendly ones unless there is too many for a busy time of year. Write to Steve Brainard, care the Nine-Bar Ranch, Rawhide Buttes P. O., Wyoming."

If a shooting star or a wide-winged angel had suddenly fallen from above into the heart of the camp, the effect could hardly have been more conspicuous. Whatever the boys were doing they quit, every man-Jack gathering about Jim in a close tangle of outstretched arms, booted legs and joyous faces, struggling for possession of the mussed sheet, noisy with happiness. In a moment the giant Steve threw himself into the midst of the group, scattering it right and left, seizing the paper and stuffing it into the bosom of his shirt.

"You gimme that!" he roared, and backed away, setting his great shoulders against the wagon-box like one driven to defense. He was not angry, as I looked for him to be; a furious red had mounted to his cheeks, but he was laughing with defiant daredeviltry, taking the chaffing of his mates—none too delicate—with undismayed good humor.

"Why, sure!" he said. "You boys just wait till you see. I'll have you all jumpin' sideways pretty soon."

"Been considered fair to middlin' for looks by different women!" mocked the irrepressible Jim. "An' will you look at him now! Them women must've been awful different."

Ben, of the P.K. outfit, added his mite:

"'Would marry if the right one found'! What the blazes do you want with a wife? Don't the cow business give you exercise enough? You let 'em alone, Steve. Women's all right; but wives is mighty different, come to pick one out o' the general bunch."

"That's horrible true!" cut in Red McGee, solemn and unsmiling. "I done it once, an' it learned me, good an' plenty. If I'd 'a' been the fool-killer, the first thing I'd had to do would've been to commit suicide. That's what!"

"You got a woman?" Steve challenged. "You don't say! Where's she at?"

Red answered with a vague outward wave of his hand. "Somewheres," he said stolidly. "I ain't carin'. She took my best gun, an' a pony I thought a heap of, an' lit out. That was down to Socorro. She wanted to come back, too, after while. 'Ain't you lonesome for me?' she writes to me, 'or shall I stay?' 'You hurry up an' stay right where you be,' I writes to her; an' she's there yet, if she ain't gone somewheres else. No, sir; I'm plumb done with this here sagebrush marryin'. Drop it, Steve."

Upon that, with an air of finality, he picked up his book and began thumbing the leaves to find his lost place; the memory of his crass tragedy—or was it comedy?—holding him grim-lipped for a moment until his primal mind had picked up the broken thread of the story. Then all else was forgotten. But the others were not thus easily to be got rid of.

"I'll have to be lookin' for a new cook by next round-up," The Boss said with a stagey seriousness.

"That's what you will," Jim agreed promptly. "Steve's goin' to quit the victual business an' make a specialty of cookin' up trouble for himself now."

"An' it's goin' to be a mighty undigestible mess, same as usual," Ben contributed. "It's goin' to lay right heavy on his stomach, too."

"Shucks!" Steve drawled, with lazy scorn. "You fellers give a man the trembles. Anybody'd think none of

you'd ever been woman-broke, the way you shy. What's a woman, anyway?"

He returned to his work at the mess-wagon, and there I found him presently when the boys had outlived their flurry of interest and had settled into their accustomed evening quiet.

"What's your idea, Steve?" I asked tentatively; for I liked the man.

Again he turned upon me a revealing look, a gleam of fire smoldering in the depths of his dark eyes.

"Winter's comin' on," he said. "Pretty soon we're going to be shut in at the bunkhouse a good bit o' the time. Seven-up don't seem to interest me as much as it did once. You ain't anxious? Don't you, Billy. I ain't got no grudge against myself. This is a right safe distance off. Mebbe I'll give myself somethin' funny to think about; that's all."

By and bye the first watch was with the herd and the rest of us were outstretched upon the ground beneath our blankets, breathing deep lungfuls of the soporific night air of the plains, feeling our senses sag under a weight of healthy drowsiness. Black's Jim voiced a last sleepy chuckle.

"Would marry if the right one found," he droned. "But they say love's blind, Steve. How you goin' to tell her? I'll tell you: you're goin' to find out that there ain't nobody so blind as them that takes to seein' things."

But Steve only burrowed deeper into his nest with a light snore. In a moment Jim made another try.

"Cheyenne's full of sheepmen that's gone locoed with lonesomeness," he said, "but I ain't never knowed of its hittin' the cow country before."

The words stirred no response, his voice trailed aimlessly off at the last, and then the silence of the great, deep night descended upon us all.

IV

CUPID LOOKS TO HIS ARMS

THE round-up was accomplished; the first night's supper in the big dining-

room at Nine-Bar was also accomplished, and we of the "gang" trailed slowly out through the cool dusk to the bunkhouse, to roll the digestive cigarette and to take up again the threads of accustomed daily life.

Somebody lit the single oil lamp that hung against the wall; somebody else kindled a pitch-pine fire in the rusty box stove, and with no more ceremony we were at home in the big, primitive room, cluttered with the nondescript odds and ends of men's belongings—saddles, guns, tobacco boxes and boots, with much else tucked away beneath the bunks and in obscure places, defying cataloguing. Against the rude walls were tacked many calendars and advertising lithographs, showing for the most part impossibly pink-and-white females in such exceedingly frivolous costumes as made the fig leaf seem prudishly strict and formal. Here and there, at rarer intervals, was a bold hunting scene or a presentment of a prize Hereford or Polled Angus, and interspersed with these were skins of gray wolves, badgers and antelope, each a trophy of some jocund hour in the open. A scarred pine table stood in the middle of the floor, covered with a litter of old playing-cards and a cigar box full of poker chips, with pipes and matches and bundles of cigarette papers within arm's reach everywhere. No one with half an eye need have waited to be told that here was the abiding-place of masculinity.

And the boys were honestly glad to return to it, after their trying days afield. Boots came off forthwith, and each man promptly found his favorite pipe, his favorite brand of nicotine and his favorite grotesque attitude of rest and comfort, while an audible sigh of pure content went up from the general throat.

Black's Jim, with his chair tilted back against the wall and his knees on a level with his chin, blinked his "com-ickle eye" drowsily; its impish light shining faint, like a star seen through a thick haze; but suddenly that eye came wide open and its roving gaze grew fixed.

"What's that?" he questioned.

"What's what?" Steve returned, around his pipestem. "Where? Why don't you learn to point, so we'll know which way you're lookin'?"

"Up yonder," Jim said, unruffled. "On that shelf. Looks like somethin' for somebody."

Steve twisted about, stretched forth his hand and took down a thick packet of letters—many letters, as all could see, borne in envelopes of every fashion, big and little, fat and lean. On the instant a conscious grin overspread his wholesome, handsome face, with a conscious flush to bear it company, and an inarticulate syllable upon his full lips to warn us that something was in the wind. It was Jim who first guessed the truth.

"Steve, have they wrote?" he asked, and at the question our dormant interest in the packet was fanned into a vital spark. Our dozing wits came broad awake and our lax muscles stiffened.

Steve said nothing at once. With exasperating deliberation he tore open the uppermost of the envelopes and drew forth what it held—two or three written sheets and a photograph. After a quick, seeing glance he chucked the picture upon the table, and it went from hand to hand—a silly, formless, vapid face, of a sort turned out by thousands from a common mold.

"Read it, Billy," Steve said, and chucked the letter after the picture—a silly, vapid letter, to match the face, and not worth repeating. "I weigh one hundred and forty pounds and very affectionate and would make a good wife to a true husband." There, in brief summary, are all her claims to consideration. A light flicker of amusement was all the emotion she stirred within the hearts of these knights of nature.

"Pass her," Jim said briefly. "Give us the next."

The next was better—much better, from one point of view at least. This writer had also sent a photograph, made in a Kansas country town gallery, in the height of bucolic art. The

costume was of the order which Jim had playfully styled "drop-stitch," displaying an amplitude of beefy shoulders, a beefy neck, thick, puffy lips and a pair of small, worldly-wise, calculating eyes shadowed by an obvious "false front" of curled locks.

"There's one that can speak her mind, good and plenty," Steve commented; and his hazard was thoroughly borne out by the letter—short and very much to the point:

Your ad reads like you mean business, and so do I, having no time to spend on foolishness, so if you mean business you can consider me with the other ones you will get. I can say I know how to treat a man because I have had two, one sickly and one stout and different every way, so I have had experience and can put up with things better than them that has not had experience. Am a willing worker and in good Society in this place, but would have no objections to Wyo. providing if you are honorable and mean business. Have money to pay my own way out there and by my own wedding clothes if you really mean business. Can cook good and milk, but they tell me you do not milk your cows in Wyo. but I could be useful other ways. Write soon and let me know.

PULSITILLA SCHWARTZ.

P.S.—You might let me know what you consider your land is worth that you say you have got two sections of, and is there a good sale for land. I might say I would have no objections to a husband some younger than me.

Steve laughed, a laugh that came from the depths of appreciation, and his eyes shone. Red McGee had taken possession of the picture and held it in his pudgy fingers, poring over its all too patent charms.

"There's one that would suit me, clear down to the ground," he said in perfect seriousness. "You can tell she's healthy an' a good feeder, an' that's the kind for a man to get along comfortable with. An' she cert'nly slings good English, don't she? If my woman had knowed how to cook, things wouldn't have happened like they did, most likely. If I was you, Steve, I'd stick right to that one. With that kind of a woman a man could make a winnin' in this country."

The Boss had come in upon us and was reading the letter over to himself, smiling broadly.

"Pulsitilla," he quoted. "Why, that's the name of one of these patent medicines. If you married her, Steve, you'd save doctor bills."

"There ain't sickness enough to speak of, out here," Steve returned. He had recovered the letter and was running again over its terse terms. "She wouldn't have no objections to a husband some younger than her," he said drily; then, with mild innuendo, "Styles have had time to change a good bit since that picture was took, ain't they? I ain't saw hair wore like that in quite a spell. No, sir! I'm much obliged to the lady; but she goes in the discard, too."

"Honest?" Red queried, with his unvarying solemnity. "Give me her, then. I'll correspond with her."

"Not much you won't!" Jim declared. "I'm in on that deal some myself. Here, I'll cut you to see which gets her. Be a sport, now. Low wins, an' ace is low."

They sat on the edge of the bunk, a soiled poker deck between them. They turned jacks on the first cut; then deuces; then sevens, while the gang looked on as if Fate hung upon it. Jim let the cards fall from his hand with a grimace of dismay.

"She's a rank Mormon, or signs don't count for nothin'," he said. "Not for me, Red. You can have her. I'll get one o' the others that Steve don't want." And Red took his treasure and retired to his bunk, brooding over it, with heaven knows what chips of thought afloat in the shallows of his mind.

There were plenty of others that Steve didn't want; now that women were throwing themselves at his head he had become all at once whimsically hard to suit. And there was a considerable range for choice, too, both in the personal appearance and in the literary attainments of the applicants for his favor. Two or three were becomingly backward in expression, coy in approach; two or three others seemed to arrive without any preliminaries of approach. "Sweetheart," one mis-sive began, and rioted in the superla-

tives of endearment through six musk-scented pages, like the work of an old and doughty professional love-maker—though the writer called all the big and little gods to witness that she was no flirt and had never loved "another." Steve shook his head over this.

"A woman never oughtn't to tell no lies she can't prove," he remarked, with the weighty air of one making a maxim. He seemed to be surfeited with the whole matter already; before he had fully caught the flavor of the adventure it had grown flat to his palate.

"Shucks!" he scoffed as he pushed the mass of stuff from him, with a touch of impatience. "A man wouldn't hardly think there was that many plumb fools, would he?"

"How many are there, Steve?" asked The Boss. Jim counted them over.

"Thirteen!" he said. "You want to watch out. Thirteen's an awful unlucky number. One of 'em'll have an air-tight cinch on you, sure, before you know it. Yes, sir; thirteen looks bad."

But there were fourteen. Out of the tail of my eye, while I read the letters aloud, I had caught a brief glimpse of the fourteenth, and knew that it was something out of the general run. It was held in a square, pale blue envelope, that had, somehow, a finer and gentler look about it than the others. And so Steve seemed to find it; for as he read, a new look kindled upon his sun-browned face. Twice he read it through, before it was slyly put away in his pocket. It was just at that point in the proceedings that his interest palled.

He sat up, ostensibly with his pipe and a magazine, after the rest of us had sought our blankets; but, rousing from a doze after a half-hour, I saw him sitting beside the rusty stove, the magazine lying neglected upon the floor, a sheet of pale blue notepaper in his hand, his posture that of one in a brown study.

In the morning, when I went for my dip in the clear, cold water of the creek,

before breakfast, Steve came trailing down from the horse-barn to join me, standing by with his broad shoulders set against the trunk of a cottonwood, looking on with a sort of impersonal, abated interest while I went through the chattering, shivering process.

"There's hot springs up in the Yellowstone country," he ventured presently; but that did not take away the chill of the water at Rawhide, with the early morning wind to aid and abet it. I hurried into my clothes and was ready for a brisk run up the hill to the house; but Steve hung back, loitering. I knew him well enough to be sure that there was something on his mind. And after a moment came disclosure. His hand was withdrawn from his pocket, and there was the square, pale blue envelope held out for me. He spoke not a word; there was only a half-abashed smile flickering back of his eyes.

"Do you want me to read it?" I asked, and he nodded briefly, keeping silence while I did as he wished.

An elusive hint of a delicate perfume rose from the sheet—as elusive in its daintiness as the charm in the lines themselves; a charm that lay not in the written words so much as in a subtle, intangible impress of the writer, utterly defiant of analysis. As I dwell upon them the words seem but a poor and faint presentment of that which the mind caught—the light-hearted raillery and the buoyant youth that flowed ethereally in and out between the written characters. The letter was written from Omaha, and began quite properly with an address to "Mr. Stephen Brainard."

What a funny world it is (so ran the missive), and what a funny lot of people in it. Now there are you, lonely, you say, because there are so "few folks" about you; and here am I, in a state of mind like yours, because there are so many. You see one new face in a week or a month; but when that meeting comes you make a new friend before the parting. I see a thousand new faces every day, every one of them a mask, with no friendliness in it. Of the two I think I should prefer your place, because you have the good hills to nod to between times, while I have only the tangle of walls

and chimneys showing from the office window. And the hills are the best—oh, much the best!

I have seen Wyoming and your cow country, so I know. It is so big and honest and young, with the sort of youngness that seems as if it must last for a long time. And I think I must have seen men out there something like you—big and honest and young, too, to match the country. That is why I am writing to you—not "serious," you know, but just "friendly," in a minute of pleasant remembrance of the good times I had—times I shall never forget. That was the very happiest and freest year of my life.

I do not know how to say it, unless I say it right out: I should be glad to have you write to me, if you want—if there are not "too many for a busy time of year." Thinking about it this afternoon, sitting here in the dust and smoke, has given me a sort of Wyoming homesickness. I would give much for another sight of the wide country. But since that may not be, a word or two from one like you would be like a "far voice out of darkness calling."

KATE BUCKLEY.

The address she gave was on a high floor of one of Omaha's somber "skyscrapers." And there was a postscript:

I cannot remember that anyone has ever called me "fair to middling for looks"; but I can understand that it must be very nice to have such things said of you. I am not sending a photograph, you see; your conditions make that rather difficult, don't you think? After that, you may not be interested; but I am nearly twenty-five, and getting nearer all the time.

Steve took the sheet from my fingers, holding it gently, almost gingerly, in his strong, brown hand, regarding it curiously, with that hovering ghost of a smile lurking just out of sight. I said nothing, nor did he seem to expect it, being so wholly absorbed.

"I've certainly got a whole lot of respect for anybody that can ride a spellin'-book like that, without gettin' throwed," were his first words, delivered very gravely. "Keeps in the saddle plumb through, don't she? I never could get a-straddle of a speller, when I was a kid, without wantin' to say my prayers first—'I pray the Lord my soul to keep,' or somethin'; an' even yet it throws a scare into me." He turned the letter over and back again, surveying it appraisingly. "Yes, sir, Billy. But how do you reckon she

come to write—a girl like her? That's what I can't sense. She's sure branded mighty dif'rent from them others. Omaha!" He grinned sidewise at me. "The Boss is goin' to ship some beef stock to Omaha pretty soon."

"Are you going to answer the letter, Steve?" I asked.

"Answer it!" he cried, the fires within him kindling. "Who? Me? Say, if I was to happen to catch four aces on the deal, would it be me if I was just to look discouraged an' lay 'em down? If you're goin' to keep watch of my trail for a spell you've got to stay awake, Billy." He pocketed the letter, chuckling. "Am I goin' to answer it? Oh, listen at him!"

I carried the oddly assorted bundle of letters to the breakfast table, begging the temporary loan of Red's treasure for the purpose, and read them aloud for the benefit of the fun-loving mistress of Nine-Bar, while Steve sat in his place, consciously a-grin. The merry-hearted little woman listened in ecstasy, as one after another of the writers told over her claims to consideration. It was a hilarious breakfast. But toward the last, turning my eyes to her face once in a while, for fresh approval, I thought I caught an expression not aroused by anything that had been opened before her—a certain subdued alertness, a commingling of doubt and mischief in her eyes, with now and then a note of absent-mindedness in her happy laughter. When the last of the thirteen had been returned to its envelope she flashed a look upon me, and from me to Steve, then settled back in her chair, her color heightened, her lips parted, with an air of hardly repressed triumph written all over her.

The boys stamped away to their day's work; but the mistress detained me in the dining-room for a moment after they were gone, her shining eyes watchful.

"Those weren't *all* the letters," she said, as one who knew.

"Weren't those enough?" I tried to evade.

"They weren't all," she repeated.

"What was the other one? Why didn't you read that, too?"

"Was there another one, really?" I parried, very lamely.

She made a little, impatient sound with her tongue, the light of mischief quickening and darkening in her glance, like a new sort of will-o'-the-wisp.

"I've a good notion—" she laughed, but caught herself up. "There, now; go away with you. I'll not say another word."

And, wondering lightly, I went to join The Boss for a day's trailing of a bunch of antelope among the hills.

V

STEVE, LITERARY ARTIST

STEVE had used no mere figure of speech in calling that "a busy time of year." Winter was already to be numbered among the possibilities, as any man at all weather-wise might know by the cloud-films which were beginning to gather toward evening in a sky which for months had been all but speckless. Meanwhile there were a score of things to be done. Laterals were to be dug from the irrigating ditch for the new alfalfa field; a reservoir and a windmill must be constructed on a desert claim; a carload of horses must be gathered for market from the big, open range south of Muskrat Canyon; three or four score beef-steers, brought together at the round-up, were almost ready for shipment to the stock-yards; miles of wire fences were to be looked over and repaired, not to mention an endless round of lesser things. Yes, there was plenty to be done, and in the doing the boys caused themselves such profound weariness of body as brought them to the bunkhouse at evening limp and nerveless and half asleep before their boots were off.

For a night or two, it is true, letter-writing affected the place like a very disease; for each man had helped himself to that one of Steve's offerings which made the strongest appeal to his whim, and each had essayed the

unaccustomed creation of long-range sentiment. But this lasted for no longer than a night or two; after that they must wait for two long weeks or more before any answer could come. The very prospect had a chilling effect upon the ardor they tried so hard to stimulate. Steve himself showed, in the presence of his mates, only a faint air of disgust over the proceeding, a scornful superiority to their folly, as though he had had not even a remote connection with it. When the next mail and the next brought other letters, he let them lie for days before he opened them, lazily and with no interest dropping them to the floor, there to be trodden upon until the next sweeping-out. Only the photographs were kept—two or three dozen of them, fastened with tacks against the wall below the tobacco shelf—a miscellaneous lot. No one saw Steve with pen in hand; so far as he was concerned no one would have judged, at a casual glance, but that the episode was closed and sealed.

Yet other signs were not wanting for the eye of one who knew his moods. He was unduly quiet, for one thing. The boys seemed easily to mistake this for the quiet of physical weariness, overlooking the fact that he had taken to sitting up of nights, after they were all soundly asleep. Once, approaching the bunkhouse at half-past ten, I saw from a distance that the lamp-light was shining through the window; but when I opened the door Steve's only apparent occupation was in idly turning the leaves of a big department store catalogue and in puffing lustily at his briar pipe.

"Going to buy some crockery, Steve?" I asked; for there the catalogue was opened. He threw the book from him across the room and stooped to poke up the fire, as though he was not yet thinking of bed.

"No," he said mildly, "I ain't buyin' no dishes. I was just kind o' millin' things over to myself. You needn't say nothin', understand? But I'm figurin' on gettin' hold of some more land down next to mine on Nigger

Baby. It's time I was doin' it, if I'm goin' to; the best's all bein' took up. There was six new claims filed last week, they tell me, over Chimney Rock way; an' the week before that a lot of soldiers' widows, a dozen in a bunch, filed this side the Platte."

"Those fraud homesteads?" I questioned.

His eyes narrowed and his lips were set. "Fraud?" he returned. "Well, it's called that, I reckon, by some. I dunno. There's lots o' things in this world that ain't done accordin' to rule. Mebbe this is one of 'em. But it's done, just the same; everybody's doin' it, an' they're gettin' the land—thousands an' thousands of acres, without nobody complainin' that I've heard of. The land agents know it; some of 'em are doin' it for themselves, hirin' homesteaders, an' all such. It's the only way a man can get enough land for the cattle business, if he's goin' into it big. What I've got now, in my claims, I got honest; but it'll all be gone before I can get any more that way. If I stay regular, I'm goin' to get left. Oh, well!" He yawned and stretched his great arms above his head, putting aside his imminent seriousness. "Don't let's fuss about it. I was only thinkin', an' there's no fraud in that. Only, I see others doin' it an' gettin' rich at it, while I'm stayin' poor; an' this ain't a poor man's country nor never will be. Rich—rich—that's what a man's got to be here, or else be satisfied with just trailin' along behind. An' that ain't me, Billy. It's that that's kept me guessin', seein' other men no older than me that didn't have any more to start with gettin' their miles an' miles under fence an' cuttin' a swath. You meet up with 'em every place; an' they're thought of well, ain't they? They seem to be thought a heap more of than us that ain't been in on the deal."

It was an unusually long speech for this man, and an unusually stern-tempered one. He seemed to realize this, for he let his face relax into its habitual glimmer of easy good-humor and began to pull off his boots.

"I'll figure it out after a while," he

said. "It ain't exactly worryin' me sick yet; only I've made up my mind that I ain't goin' to keep on bein' a common dub all my life, if there's any way to help it. I'll be seein' through it pretty soon. We better turn in now; it's gettin' some late."

When I saw him the next morning, setting off for his work at the head-gate of the irrigating ditch, nothing seemed to be worrying him. He hailed me right jovially, and turned back for a moment's speech across the wire fence that marked the stage road.

"I started three deer day before yeste'd'y, over on the middle butte," he said. "You keep it quiet, an' you an' me'll go after 'em, when I get through this job—this an' another one I've got to do. Deer's gettin' right scarce, close in like this; it's all of a year since I run up against the last one."

He went away across the cactus-strewn barren toward the hills, swinging his long-handled shovel, whistling a lively tune, with the mellow sunlight showering upon him, seeming to drench him with its liquid gold. His was clearly not the bearing of one afflicted with a perplexing problem; and lightly I wondered, as I watched him go, whether he had really meant what he had said last night—whether he had really ever seriously meant anything in all his life, beyond the unstained joy of robust living.

By and bye, when there was nothing else to be done, I set off for the granite ridge at the foot of which his work lay, bearing a generous parcel from the kitchen. We would lunch together, he and I, I promised myself, with time for a little lazy speech in the warm nooning. That would be well worth while.

Noon was still an hour off when I came lagging within sight of the head-gate; yet there was Steve, lying at his length beneath a cottonwood, his idle shovel at his side. I thought him asleep; but after a moment I saw that I must guess again. He was awake, and busy; so much was plain, even from a distance. A nearer view showed

that he had found a broad, flat stone, half buried in the sand, to serve him for a table; and there he lay, breast down, with a litter of paper outspread before him, a pencil in his hand, his black head bent low, his whole body stirring with the labor of composition. So intent he was that he did not hear me until, a couple of rods away, I picked up a handful of gravel and sent it pattering down around him. Then, quick and lithe as a surprised panther, he leaped to his feet, sweeping the scattered sheets together, turning to show a face dyed scarlet with confusion. But when he saw who it was, "Shucks!" he said disgustedly. "Say, why don't you wear a sheep-bell when you travel around this way? You'll have all your friends ketchin' heart disease. You had me plumb rattled."

"I'm sorry," I said not too contritely. "Maybe you don't want to be bothered. I'd just as soon walk around till you're through."

"No, stay," he returned. He sat down again, with his back against the tree trunk, and began thumbing over the crumpled sheets, getting them in order, scowling at the scrawled lines. "I'm through—as much through as I ever will be, I reckon. Say, I never knowed it was such a job to write a woman-letter, when you want to say things. It don't worry me none to talk to 'em, when I've got my eyes on 'em—if they're anything for looks. But this is—" He stopped a strong word on the tip of his tongue. "This is like throwin' a rope in the dark."

For a little time he sat, studying what he had written, puzzled and dissatisfied. Then, impulsively, he gave the creation into my hand.

"I wish you'd see if she makes sense," he said briefly. "I've wanted to show her to you."

It was evidently a studied draft of earlier outline sketches; much interlined and crisscrossed, with careful substitutions of words here and there, and with many signs that he had turned aside from the straight trail now and again to dodge the more for-

bidding bugaboos of the dread "spellin'-book." Lamp oil was in it, as well as midday sunlight. Not a line of it had been easy; every word seemed to hint that it had been traced in sweat and blood. Perhaps that was why it was the very embodiment of himself. It ran:

MISS KATE BUCKLEY:

I expect you laughed some at me for putting that in the paper. And you had not got done laughing when you wrote that letter. It was just a time when a man lets go the bridle and slouches in the saddle with the bridle hanging loose. It made me feel like a fool when I saw it printed but I do not feel so foolish any more since your letter got here, and it is the only one I am answering and the only one I did not let the boys see except one man who is friendly, and I will not show your next letter to him if you do not want me to, because you are going to write me another one and some more too. Now I expect I did that because there are times out here when a man that is a man would give a month's pay to look at the shadow of a right kind of woman and she would not have to be big enough to throw a big shadow either. And I think you are that kind.

Yes, Wyoming is a big country only I think you are wrong about the men being all honest, because there are all different kinds only not so many chances for going wrong as other places. There are some times when I would go wrong but no chance with town twenty miles away and too much trouble to saddle up and go for it and be sore at myself about it afterwards, but the boys are not all that lazy. No, it is not the men but the country that is different, with places wide apart and time to change your mind. Only you are right about the men being mostly young because the old ones do not come so much to a new country, but there are some old ones like Uncle Mark Bennett that has been here since before the first railroad fifty years and has had five wives the first a squaw. It is a healthy country for old men that are here, because Uncle Mark is so healthy he can remember the names of all his wives without forgetting any and he is going on eighty. But I do not hardly expect to do that well.

If you were here I could show you some nice places if you are good at climbing where horses cannot go being too rough and steep, a kind of park on the big Butte on top with high grass and springs and good timber and some times you will start deer from in the grass, a buck or a couple of doe with fawns in season. Nobody but me goes there much. I go when work is slack and leave my guns always down below not to bother the deer in case I would want to. That place has not been tramped down by

cattle or spoiled, and there are some other places like Wildcat canyon and Castle rocks and Flat Top and the cave, but the rest is mostly steers and fences account of getting settled up. There are enough places to take a good many days though but it does not do much good to think about it like this five hundred miles off, only I think you would like to see those places.

Now I expect I have said all until you write again which I hope will be soon because it takes the mail so long out here. It is all right about that photograph now but I am going to get it some time just the same and you are going to give it to me because I want it. I go to Omaha some times with stock but I would not look you up unless you said to.

STEVE BRAINARD.

P.S.—That about my looks was just put in there. Women do not have the nerve to tell that big a lie.

S. B.

Steve was regarding me soberly, with hardly concealed anxiety, as I finished the last page. I laughed; but it was a laugh that he understood, and the lines of his face softened.

"Will she do?" he asked.

"She'd do if I were the girl," I told him.

"She'll have to do," he returned. "I'm goin' to send her, anyway. I'm just goin' to copy her off an' send her, an' if Miss Kate Buckley don't like her I reckon there are waste-baskets in Omaha. But, Billy, you listen to me: My kids are goin' to be learned to sling a pen. Now you hear me!"

VI

"MY FRIEND ELIZABETH"

ONCE his letter was duly "copied off," signed, sealed and on its way to delivery, Steve seemed to dismiss all feeling of concern for the outcome, lapsing easily into his accustomed self; doing his turn at the needful things out of doors, taking joy in the hilarious doings of his mates, feeding lustily when meal-times came, and joining us in the bunkhouse o' nights ready for anything a-going, from seven-up to a discussion of the immortality of the soul. That was a way he had; a primitive sort of fatalism which held the

future bravely in abeyance, letting the days mostly suffice unto themselves, and missing none of their golden benefits through that poor faculty which the world calls "forecast." What was to come would come; and, meanwhile, good things were actually *here* and worth enjoying.

Yet, as I learned by and by, in some fashion he kept a reckoning of the time; may be by the calendar, maybe by sheer memory. One day, from the site of an old Indian village on the summit of the Buttes, where I had gone on a quest for relics, I saw the mail-stage come crawling out of the distance, a mere moving speck of dusty black against the dusty yellow earth. From time to time, glancing about, I kept listless track of its advance until the dry rattle of its wheels sounded faintly from the foot of the hill. Then, from across the billowy sand-waste to the eastward a horseman came flying—Steve, as anyone might have seen by the way he sat his beast. He halted the stage below, and through my glasses I saw a pouch produced and emptied and something passed to Steve's hand before he rode back to his work. So he was in no mind to be curiously spied upon in this affair of his. And that was like him, too.

It was a good letter he had got; that was plain enough from the subtle shine of his eyes, from the way he carried his head, from his whole triumphant aspect when he came into the bunkhouse at dusk, found his pipe and lolled upon his bunk, looking out benignly upon us through a thick blue cloud. He had little to say beyond now and then a pointed syllable or two of comment upon the others' talk, yet his every fiber's end seemed to be throwing off genial sparks; laughter bubbled and seethed within him and would hardly be held back—he was in that fine mood known as "feelin' just right."

Red McGee, too, had some concealed cause for high spirits, though with him the signs were characteristically and vastly different. He was flushed of face and garrulous; the moldering remains of dead and buried anecdotes

were exhumed from his memory and made to parade before us in their grave-clothes; he even developed a tendency to sing, and when Red essayed song it indicated to his hearers one of the last stages of some acute mental disorder—it was only a meaningless, rhymeless, rhythmless rune, beside which a Sioux dance-chant had the artistic value of a symphony. Altogether, the atmosphere of the room seemed tensely surcharged with the unusual and mysterious.

And when the supper call came and we filed hungrily into the big dining-room, there was no relief from the tension. The gay-hearted little mistress had something on her mind, too. She was excited, bright-eyed, continually laughing in the wrong places and betraying by a slipped word that she was giving only indifferent attention to what was being said around the table. The Boss must have been in her confidence, for he was palpably conscious and broadly smiling, in the manner of an honest man who is doing his best to keep a secret. I asked no questions of anyone, knowing discreet silence and a semblance of unconcern to be the most taking baits for disclosure. But none came, though we sat up later than usual that night, and I took pains to keep myself handy, in case one or another would develop the mood for revelation. By and bye I went to bed with curiosity wholly unsatisfied.

"I can't show you, Billy," Steve said in the morning, when we were together for a little while. "She don't say so, right out; but a man can understand she'd sort o' rather not. It's all right, though, let me tell you."

With that, perforce, I had to be reluctantly satisfied for the time. But the next play in the pretty game was made above the table, so that all might see.

We had been repairing fences over south of Nigger Baby, going out in the early dawn, getting dinner at a neighbor's place ten miles from home and returning late at evening, toil-marked, dusty, weary with the day's work and the long ride; hungry, too,

so that we wasted no time over the niceties of toilet before crowding to our seats around the full board.

Then we got a shock; for a light step sounded upon the stairs leading from above, a light touch pushed open the door, and there was revealed to our dismayed eyes a figure which in the big, empty West wears ever the awesome look of divinity—the figure of a New Girl.

To the first startled gaze she appeared as though she must have stepped bodily out of a well-wrought picture, or possibly out of one of the lower but still lovely regions of paradise. She was a light and airy creature, exquisitely hued as to lips and cheeks and throat, the tints blending as by artful contrivance into those of her gown, which was a model of dainty simplicity. A riotous mass of red-gold hair lay upon her head and coiled in rebellious profusion about her neck; her eyes were springs of limpid light; youth and health and the inexpressible grace of sex invested her like an aura. Oh, she was good to look upon—good, good!

She stood for a moment in the doorway, a faint air of embarrassment upon her as she glanced around the gaping circle. The impish little mistress, immaculately frocked, as always, and radiant with diabolic glee over the success of this dramatic “enter,” arose in her place.

“Miss Elizabeth Webster,” she said, with beautiful matter-of-factness. “My friend Elizabeth. You have heard me speak of her, boys.” And then she calmly proceeded to call off our names, one by one, with deadly precision.

There was a look upon the group as though they were being named for their turns upon the gallows. I, for one, have never quite forgiven the little lady for that joke of hers. It was near the week’s end, and the days had been full. Faces were unshaven since last Sunday morning; flannel shirts had fared badly in the encounter with barbed wire fences; some wore their sleeves tucked up over

sunbrowned forearms; dust lay thick upon every pair of shoulders; shirt collars gaped under the lax clasp of wilted neckerchiefs—to sum it up briefly and to put it mildly, we were a nice-looking bunch of tatterdemalions to be thrust with such scant ceremony under the amusedly keen eyes of a New Girl.

And we behaved accordingly, like the oafs and boors we knew she was taking us for. Two or three got to their feet awkwardly and made a limp, wretched bend at the waist which they seemed faintly to hope she would take for a bow; one or two managed to gasp a wordless, dry murmur, deep in their throats; but most of us merely sat as the surprise had laid its paralyzing touch upon us—nerveless, blinking, with hanging jaws, while the New Girl, doing her ladylike best not to laugh, walked demurely to her place at the mistress’s side, taking her seat with as much self-possession as though such proceedings were the common order of her daily life. A half-veiled, inquiring look passed from her to her hostess.

Then these wicked conspirators—for such they most assuredly were—got their shock.

“Why, where’s Steve?” the mistress demanded sharply, suddenly realizing that his seat was empty. Dimly I remembered that he had not come to the house with us after the hurried dismount at the barn and the hurried washing-up at the creek. But what had become of him?

The answer came before our first puzzled wonder had died away; for we heard him whistling a careless tune outside, heard his firm, elastic step upon the kitchen porch, and then—then the effect of the New Girl’s “enter” paled almost to inconsequence.

For there stood Steve, full in the glare of Expectancy’s calcium spot-light; Steve, on a Friday night after a lusty week’s toil, shaven, combed, clean and clothed as for dress parade! His work-worn blue overalls had been discarded, and in their stead he wore neat gray

trousers, a brand-new four-dollar shirt of navy-blue, set off by a carefully knotted scarlet kerchief at the neck, and on his feet were his fifteen-dollar riding-boots, fresh from his trunk, decorated with a pair of Mexican silver spurs—his whole make-up, from crown to toe, speckless, flawless in effect; and over all his wholesome, handsome, bold, daredevil face, illumined by that look which goes with the full consciousness of mastery of the situation. With the carriage of a victor he stood just within the doorway, drawn to his full, lithe height, looking easily around upon us and watching the effect soak in.

There was the sound of sharply in-drawn breaths. I glanced at the mistress and exulted; for if ever a woman showed that she was completely and effectually "done," this one did. She was half out of her chair, staring, her lips parted, a look of vanquishment upon her. But that did not last. In the space of two quick heart-beats she was herself again, with her wits under full control.

"Elizabeth," she purred smoothly, "this is my cousin, Stephen Brainard—Miss Webster."

Steve came forward with the manner of one born to polite ceremonies—a manner that mere art cannot teach. There was no faintest trace of embarrassment upon him. "Miss Webster," his deep voice said softly, with the inflection of a subtle caress. He took her hand in his and held it firmly for two or three long seconds, while their eyes met in a look that was half a challenge and half sheer, downright, irrepressible youngness and delight in the encounter. It was she who first let her eyes fall. Anyone might have known that that was not Steve's part.

The remembrance of that hour remains with me in most of its details as a vague blur. Only this is clear: For the most part a blight of speechlessness was upon us of the "gang"; or if, nerving ourselves to a flash of courage, we tried to say something that would bring those lovely eyes upon us, our efforts trailed off into idiotic, meaningless mutterings and we got only an

amused smile for our pains. But Steve shone, literally, brilliantly; slow, calm, contained, he bore his part as one schooled all his life to the amenities. Those of us who knew him best in camp and field and bunkhouse had never guessed the gifts that were concealed in him—the wit, the readiness, the polished ease. Never for a moment was he at a loss; and through it all, from first to last, there gleamed from his dark eyes the subdued but inextinguishable light of victory. This was Steve's hour.

VII

"YOU THINK AGAIN"

It was a grimly silent, disgruntled bunch that filed out through the darkness to the bunkhouse. Although every man-Jack of us longed with all his starved senses to linger in the Presence, we could not compass it in the shattered state of our nerves. Somebody pushed his chair back from the table, and we got up and clumped out in self-conscious confusion—all save Steve. He was in the middle of a narrative that was inspiring a musical rivulet of laughter from the lips of the girl, and he was not the one to put such a draft aside until it was drained. All right; we didn't want him along; we could have gotten on very well without him from the first.

We poked up the fire and lit the lamp, then sat down to chew the cud of our discomfiture. No one had anything to say for a while; we merely sat and glowered, exploring in the deep places of our souls for the words that would come handy by and bye. We all felt alike; there was neither rhyme nor reason in it, but the butt of our common grievance was Steve. What a contempt we had for him; for his good looks, for his cleverness—for all that went to make up his sum-total! We were hardly ready to kill him outright; but I think any one of us would have been delighted, had he been in imminent peril at that moment, to go out

with a rescue party and find him already dead. Maybe you know the feeling.

It was Red McGee who first broke the silence. He was pulling off his boots to rest his tired feet, when his glance fell by chance upon Black's Jim, who was cutting a chew from his thick plug of tobacco. Red watched in silence until the fragment was trimmed to the right shape and tucked comfortably into the chewer's cheek. Then he growled surlily:

"I hate to see a man chawin' good tobacco when he ain't got but one eye to chaw it with."

At another time this might easily have brought on further conversation; but Jim understood, and his "good eye" gleamed upon us.

"Ain't that Steve the old ——!" he drawled, with a closing word that is discreetly cut out of the best received lexicons. "Right down ornery, that was. One of us would've give him a hunch, wouldn't we, if we'd knowed? But how in the name of Old Peeled-Heel did *he* know? That's where I get bothered."

"Aw, him!" Red scoffed, with rising spleen. "The missus, she tipped it off to him."

"No, she didn't," I put in, and proceeded to tell how I knew.

"Aw!" McGee repeated; and because there seemed to be nothing more to be said, silence fell again, lasting until Steve appeared after a quarter of an hour, oozing bland complacency at every pore.

He must have felt the frostiness in the air of the room. We took no notice of him whatsoever, keeping on studiously with whatever we were about, letting him hunt for a seat and find his own tobacco and matches. Ordinarily a half-dozen pouches would have been chucked toward him. We were doing our best to make him understand that he was out of favor and ought to be ashamed of himself.

But he was in no frame of mind to let our state of miff affect him. He got his pipe going, then tilted back his chair and chuckled. Glancing his

way out of the corner of my eye, I saw him radiant.

"Gawd, boys!" he said in that big, open, lordly way of his that would break down all barriers of restraint, "what you sore about? Get over it! I wasn't aimin' to hoodoo you fellers none; I was just keepin' up with that girl Molly. Hell, if I'd a-thought——"

Black's Jim began to swear—began in irritated ill-nature, with short, snappy words that carried a hot sparkle; but after a minute he was swearing in sheer admiration.

"Now you tell how the blazes you *knew*," he concluded.

Steve grinned; but there was an enigmatic fit upon him.

"I never was no sleep-walker," he returned. "A man that don't want to get caught right in the middle of a snooze when there's somethin' doin', he wants to stay awake. Ain't that sense?"

"Well, but *Steve*! Somebody wised you up. Don't tell *me*!"

Steve laughed slyly. "There's somethin' in just naturally *bein'* wise. Some folks is that way."

"Specially when there's a woman in it anywhere," McGee suggested with sour malice.

"Why, yes!" Steve agreed placidly. "I've noticed that, too. I reckon I'd wake up in the middle o' the night, even after ridin' hard, if there was a woman movin' round in her slippers anywheres this side o' Cheyenne. It ain't my fault."

"An' did you see how she noticed him?" Jim inquired at large. "Just kep' her eyes on him every move he made. But then, I'll bet he ain't the first she's looked at with them eyes o' her'n, nor he won't be the last, neither—not that kind of a girl."

"Well, I was the one right then," Steve claimed. "That's plenty good enough for me."

The talk took a wide turn then; good, clean, natural man's talk it was, with Woman as the centre of its circumference. There is nothing like the big outdoors for keeping the mind of a man in a state of health and free of

all morbidness. It was frank talk, but any normal woman might have stood by and listened with untroubled heart—which is more than can be said of some other talk in other man circles I have butted into elsewhere.

It was getting on toward half-past eight, and we were gradually easing off toward bedtime; all excepting Steve, who still lounged in full regalia, joining sometimes in the talk, but for the most part brooding in quiet. One or two had stretched out upon their bunks for a light preliminary doze by way of an appetizer. It might be said fairly that the bunkhouse was *en déshabillé*.

Then suddenly we caught the murmur of voices outside, drawing nearer—women's voices, with the accompaniment of a lightsome, rippling laugh. Consternation gripped us; the dozers were electrified into wakefulness and sat up in disheveled dismay. Steve alone was tranquilly undisturbed.

"Steve!" I cried. "Did you—?"

"I didn't," he retorted. "But didn't I give you all notice not to go off in no more trances?"

"Will you look at the looks o' this joint?" Jim lamented, and we made an instantaneous dive for some of the more conspicuous litter, trying to crush it in beneath the bunks; but those receptacles were already full to bursting, and the trial was an egregious failure. Red McGee hid his bootless feet beneath the edge of a handy tarpaulin, and the rest of us had time only to draw a long breath before there came a tap at the door and an artless question from the mistress:

"May we come in a minute?"

"Sure!" It was Steve's voice that answered, and Steve's hand that swung open the door for them.

The mistress came first, with the air of one chortling in glee; her friend Elizabeth following demurely, with a well-bred assumption of seeing nothing unusual, yet with the eternal feminine shining in her eyes.

"Elizabeth has never seen a ranch bunkhouse," the mistress said. "I

tried to tell her; and then I thought she'd better see for herself. I knew you wouldn't mind."

"The boys are plumb tickled," Steve returned hardily. "Here's chairs."

She was a wondrously charming girl. That was borne in upon us afresh when she sat down and with natural, unstudied grace and simplicity became as one of us. She did us good—such good as a spray of fragrant bloom might do by starting unexpectedly out of the parched sand waste at midsummer. For one so sweetly unaffected and unspoiled, there were no confining social forms preventing instant friendship, and she became at once our friend, without feigning, showing her living, human interest in the things we were doing and thinking; questioning and wondering with the frank outspokenness of a child. Now and then, at rare intervals—maybe once or twice in a lucky lifetime—there come encounters like that, which waive all senseless preliminaries and get down at once to the solid basis of contact and liking. She was no mere dilettante of the female tourist sort, saying, "Just fancy, now!" or "How perfectly fascinating!" when things were revealed to her. She was—oh, well, she was all right. Fill in the gaps for yourself. We took joy in her.

By and bye her interested eyes came upon the medley of photographs tacked against the wall beneath the tobacco shelf. Red McGee caught the glance and thought he saw a chance to even up things a bit.

"Them's Steve's women," he volunteered. "Ain't he the cuckoo?" And forthwith he set about a not too literal history of the "Heart-Arrows" incident, pruning and padding as suited him and accomplishing something much better than one would have expected from the blunt-witted look of the man.

"An' Steve, he's layin' out to marry that double-chinned widder from Pontiac, quick as she's got the insurance money from her last one," he concluded, flushed with the heady fumes of the New Girl's very evident delight

in the narrative. But his complacency was short-lived.

"Y—e—s," Steve drawled. "An' where's that one o' your'n, Red? She'd be pleased to know about that one, too, an' how you're comin' on. Fetch her out."

"Aw," Red deprecated; but he stirred with a wistful movement. The man in him would have displayed his possession; but he became aware of the difficulty.

"Fetch her out," Steve repeated. "The ladies won't mind your stockin' feet, nor them holes in the heels."

"Aw, there ain't no holes," McGee affirmed, floundering suddenly earthward from his flight of fancy. "These socks is right new."

"What you ashamed of, then?" Steve tormented. "Not the woman?"

"No, I ain't ashamed of the woman," Red retorted with gathering heat. "I'll show you." And he shuffled as he was, bootless and with one suspender hanging, to his trunk across the room, bringing forth the photograph in all its fleshy splendor and laying it in the girl's hand.

"You can tell that Red's the one with the good eye for a female," Steve said gravely. "We're expectin' she'll make him a real good wife. He'll be the fourth; but she looks like she could wear out another one, don't she?"

Our friend Elizabeth was bending over the picture, affecting to want a better light upon it; but she had turned rose-pink to the nape of her neck and was biting hard upon the hem of the handkerchief pressed to her lips.

"She's very—nice looking," she said, in the subdued tone of effort.

"She'll brace up Wyoming society right smart," Steve went on. "The State's sufferin' for some o' them able-minded women, like she looks to be. We're expectin' her 'most any train now."

"Aw, shut your open face!" Red growled. "She ain't—I ain't got—aw——"

The girl arose hastily, with a stifled cough. "Come!" she said to the mis-

tress. "We must go. It must be very late. Good night!"

And they were gone.

Black's Jim drew a long breath.

"That girl—" he began; but his vocabulary seemed inadequate. "Say, boys, we'll sure have to show her a good time. Let's fix up somethin' for Sunday—down the creek a piece, or over Chimney Rock way, or——"

"She's goin' hawssback with me Sunday, up the canyon," Steve observed with casual calm. "She's awful fond of hawssback."

Jim stared, and his mouth came slowly open; but no word issued, and he shut his lips again to a close, tight line.

By and bye, when I had Steve alone, I remarked: "I suppose Miss Kate Buckley will be wondering about the letter that never comes."

He turned his eyes upon me—eyes with a dancing flicker of flame in them.

"Think so?" he said. "What makes you think that, Billy?"

"Why, Steve! You're not the man to follow a dim trail when there's good hunting in plain sight."

"Think so?" he repeated, a slow smile curving his lips. "You think again, Billy."

VIII

CUPID TAKES AN AIRING

WHAT a kindly mood the gods were in, to be sure, when they ordained that mortal life should begin with youth! It could not have been mere caprice. Isn't it more likely that they fondly wanted to let us know, even for a little while, something of how it feels to be gods, with the immortal fires warming the blood?

That was the fleeting impression I got, on that November Sunday morning, as I looked on from a little distance while Steve brought up his pair of saddle-horses from the barn to where Elizabeth stood awaiting him. They were both so instinct with splendid youth! The animals, too, were mettlesome.

some with the thrill of youth astir in them; and though by good rights the day might have been winterishly cold it was of a balmy mildness—as though the aged year, seeing what was going forward, had been thrown into a tender, retrospective musing upon the bygone springtime, and so had forgotten to be crotchety. To my heart's core I envied Steve as he helped the girl to mount and got into his own saddle with a lithe spring; and so did every man of us, covertly watching from wood lot or calf corral or alfalfa stack.

"Dinner will be at two o'clock," the mistress called to them from the porch, where she stood with The Boss to see them off. "Don't forget. Mr. Morrison will be here, and maybe the Savages. Don't keep us waiting."

"All right," Steve returned, over his shoulder, as the ponies started down the lane, eager for the open country. At the end of the lane he dismounted to open the gate; then we saw them turn into the westward trail; caught another fleeting glimpse as they forded the creek, and stood idly listening to the fainter hoof-beats upon the stones until there was not even an echo to dwell upon. Dully we took up again our humdrum tasks, waiting as patiently as we might for two o'clock.

"Oh, how beautiful it is!" the girl cried as they passed up from the sheltering valley of the Rawhide to the first hill crest, and her eyes rested upon the mighty prospect that stretched away and away to the borders of infinity.

Steve's glance followed hers.

"It's a good country," he said tranquilly.

"It's wonderful!" she declared. "Look at the color of those hills—sapphires and amethysts and opals! Oh, I should think you would just love it!"

He smiled at her ecstasy. "I expect I do," he returned. "Sometimes a man gets to feelin' wore out with it, and gets to wishin' it was dif'rent, 'most any way; but then I expect it's natural for him to love a place he fits into. The boys like it. If one of 'em goes away, with one o' those lonesome

spells on him, I've noticed that he mostly comes back. The country gets in his blood, somehow."

"I can believe that," she cried. "It seems a pity to think that it will all be civilized by and bye, doesn't it?"

"Civilized?" He regarded her curiously.

"Yes. Smoothed down, I mean, and tamed, with the people living according to funny little rules, as they do other places."

He took time to meditate. "I've been thinkin' it's gettin' pretty civilized already. You can see these wire fences 'most everywhere, and nobody carries a gun any more; and there's schools scattered around, and a whole lot of dif'rent brands of religion. It's changed a heap."

"Religion!" she laughed, as though she thought him jesting.

"Well, preachin', I mean. There's a sight o' that lately. We've always had religion, of course; I reckon a man never gets away from that."

Still she seemed to regard this as merely a humorous feint, failing to see how gravely in earnest he was.

"I've noticed that there's always religion," he went on quietly. "Churches and such-like come along afterwards, but seems like a man can't go to a country so new that religion ain't got there ahead of him. These boys, now—they ain't been taught it out of a hymn-book, but they're plumb religious."

A man is always hampered a bit in after-relations when the first impression he makes upon a woman is that of being a humorist. Steve, turning from his contemplation of the horizon to look at her, became aware of her amused smile.

"Oh, of course," he said quickly, "their religion ain't always on 'em, like missionaries. It don't crop out, so you can notice it, when they're tryin' to set the hot iron on a stout yearlin' bull, nor when they're tryin' to keep straddle of a new hawss that's jumpin' stiff-legged. That wouldn't be natural. But it comes when they're out on the range somewheres, miles and miles,

and wake up in their blankets in the middle of the night to turn over, and then lay there for a minute, lookin' up at the bigness, and wonderin'. That's what I mean. Ain't that religion?"

She could not gainsay that, even had she been inclined. But she understood, and their talk took a serious turn; not too serious, however, and not so coldly abstract but that their own warm youth was in every word, giving it life. Many other things they talked of, too, as they rode gaily onward. Sometimes Steve was content to point out to her one notable beauty or another in the wide landscape; sometimes he discoursed of the work that was going forward—man's work, full of virility and daring; and sometimes he dropped easily into whimsical narrative of the doings of his world, putting his heart into it and getting his reward when she laughed that rippling laugh of hers with its rich, ready undertone. It was evident that he was rapidly getting under the influence. For most of the time he rode abreast of her on the wide trail, desiring nothing so much as to be near her; but now and again he would rein back his beast, letting her get a little way in the lead, that he might feast his eyes at his will upon her trim, supple figure, upon the contour of her neck and cheek, and upon the burnished old gold of her hair. And before they had entered the shadow of the somber, rock-strewn hills that guard the mouth of the canyon they had entered upon dangerous ground in their talk—or he had, at least, under her covert inducements. He was telling her of himself, revealing to her what no one else had ever discovered concerning the thoughts he had of life and labor and—love.

Here is something that will show how quickly he got on with his intimacies. They had dismounted at a spring a couple of miles up the canyon, and he had stooped to fill her drinking-cup, when among the stones at the spring's marge he found a stone hide-drill, relic of the old Indian days—an exquisitely wrought fragment of moss-

agate, fashioned by a hand of exceeding cunning; a veritable treasure. Steve held it forth in his brown palm for the girl to see.

"Look at that!" he said very gently. "Some young buck made that for some girl he thought a heap of. You can tell that, can't you? There can't be no mistake. Ain't it funny, after all these years and years, when they're both ever so dead, and nobody knows even what tribe they belonged to, you can tell that the man that made that thing loved the girl he made it for? That's why he done his best on it. And I expect when he was makin' it he was thinkin' it was all so plumb real—livin', you know, and—lovin'. And he made it the best he could—for her. It never come into his head that by and bye, when his hands and her'n was done with it, I'd be comin' along an' pickin' it up and givin' it to you."

She had regarded him steadfastly while he spoke, and now she took the dainty trinket into her hand, holding it with a sort of caressing tenderness, the delicate color in her cheeks deepening vividly. A long silence fell; her eyes were fixed upon the bit of stone, as though she were not quite sure of her power to meet his glance with composure. Her seeming embarrassment was like a tonic to his courage.

"It would be a pretty rank world, wouldn't it, if no man had ever loved a woman?" he said, and saw with delight that she did not gain in self-possession; for he took that to mean that she was not a practiced hand with situations like this. It was a vague comfort to have it so. "The things a man would do would be pretty poor," he went on quietly. "I expect a man never rightly senses what it means—his work, or anything else, much—till the right woman shows him."

She relieved the tension with a light laugh, raising her eyes to his, and he was a bit surprised to observe how calm they were, after all.

"From the things you've been telling me, Wyoming seems to have had plenty of just the right women for teachers," she said.

He colored beneath his tan; but he was not to be so easily silenced.

"They keep comin' in," he returned mildly.

She put his gift away in her riding-gauntlet and made ready to remount, but he stopped her.

"Let's tie the ponies up here a minute or two. They can't climb where we're goin'. I've got a place I want to show you."

He led the way to the foot of a bold, bald hill that rose steeply at the south of the spring and began to mount its craggy side, turning and doubling here and there among the ragged rocks with an appearance of familiarity. She followed with light, sure strength until the sturdy effort left her breathless. How was she to divine his cunning in picking the path and setting the pace? He took her hand in his to aid her over a difficult spot, then drew it within the hollow of his arm, detaining it there firmly.

"It's a good piece to the top," he explained plausibly, but from that point onward the way grew mysteriously easier.

"I come here, once in a while, when I get bothered," he said as they neared the domed summit; "but I ain't ever brought anybody else till now. Shut your eyes a minute, and don't look till I say. I'll watch out for your footin'. Now!"

Her awe was almost abject as her eyes opened upon the mighty prospect. Far to the eastward, showing beyond the intervening crests, stretched the unnumbered miles of the big, empty plains; far to the westward, over other summits, the plains began again, swelling to meet the distant mountains. Below, almost at her feet, tossed a billowy waste of rugged peaks, tumbled, torn and tormented into a very chaos, sweeping away and away until it beat itself out in a misty froth against the southern sky-line. Upon the scene there rested a profound silence, that might have endured since the beginning of things.

Steve bared his head as he gazed; then his eyes sought the intent face of the girl.

"I know how it makes you feel," he said gently. "Nor you wouldn't get over it if you saw it a million times. I don't. Look yonder. That black splotch over there is Spoon Buttes, down by the Platte, thirty miles. And that big old hump right ahead, with the white top, that's Laramie Peak with the snow on it. That's better than forty miles off. Watch that cloud hit it! It's snowin' up there, hard; you can pretty near feel it, can't you?"

The breath of the wilderness blew strongly upon them, a breath with an icy chill in it. The girl's face was pale as she felt the vast mystery of it.

"It's like 'a wind from unsunned spaces blown,'" she murmured.

The words had an instantaneous and strange effect upon him, out of all keeping with their apparent importance. He was in the act of pointing out to her some new landmark in the hazy distance; but his outstretched arm hung idly in air, then fell slowly to his side, and the words upon his lips were choked back with a quickly indrawn breath. He gave her a lightning flash of a look, a riot of surprised lights in his eyes; then caught himself under instant control and turned his back upon her, his face radiant, exultant. Luck had been with him, if he did not want her to see; she was too intent upon the majestic wonders of the view to note his vagaries of behavior. When he turned to face her again he was quite his accustomed self in outward seeming.

"This country strikes most folks as bein' awful new," he drawled, growing safely abstract in his speech; "but when I look at that mess o' hills out there it seems terrible old. That's what I like about comin' here; it gives you somethin' to kind o' hold on to that ain't just today or yesterday."

He was unaccountably, buoyantly irresponsible in his humor as they began the slow descent toward the spring, and he declined point-blank to put aside this mood. Deftly she tried to lure him into further speech of himself, further revelations of his inner spirit;

but he would not rise to her baits except to flout them playfully. It seemed that some sort of mental reaction was upon him.

"Oh, I don't know as a man ought to try to think things out," he said once, with airy unconcern. "What's the good? Plain bull strength and fool luck—that's a pretty good combination to draw to in this game out here. I've noticed it mostly wins out, if a man ain't afraid to slide out his chips on it."

But when they were mounted again and following the trail, he lapsed into inexplicable silence for a time, playing with his bridle-rein and staring absently ahead, in the manner of a man who is carefully putting two and two together and carefully verifying the sum. One thing was plain, however, his thoughts were not disagreeable to him.

We were at dinner when they came in, a full half-hour late, he bearing himself with unconcealed satisfaction, she with her hair blown by the wind into lovely disorder, her dainty beauty at its freshest and best. It was not a bit hard to see that they had enjoyed themselves.

The big dining-room was full. There were we who belonged to the place, to start with; and there were the Savages, a nice, friendly, numerous family from somewhere over beyond; and there was that fellow Morrison—meaning no unmerited disrespect.

I didn't like Morrison, and I couldn't understand how he was able to move in our set—unless it might be by virtue of his twelve thousand acres, or perhaps because Wyoming society was a trifle too democratic to exclude anyone. Certainly he didn't get in through any irresistible charm of person or presence.

He was a big man in body, but of that make which suggests good material going to waste—a portly front, an accordeon-plaited chin, a thick, oily forehead, and low hills of fat over his cheek-bones, beneath his small gray eyes. One might have overlooked the other items as mere misfortune if it

hadn't been for his eyes—pale-irised, with no apparent power of expression save of the clandestine order. But he had grown passing rich, during his brief six or eight years in the country, and his riches had brought him a certain reputation; that is to say, he was accounted a "solid man." He had sat through one term in the State Senate, and he was adding to his already big holdings of land as rapidly as questionable methods would allow. Beyond that there was no specific charge against his integrity. Nevertheless, I didn't like him.

I had been wondering how he would impress our friend Elizabeth. When he was presented he carried off his part of the ceremony with oily ease, purring and smirking and walking clear around the long table to take her hand in his. She was very nice to him in the meeting; she could hardly have been anything but nice to anyone; and when she came to her place at the table, after a touch or two to her hair and her ribbons before the mirror, he fixed his expressionless gaze upon her and kept it there.

What was more, forthwith he set about monopolizing the talk, with as much brazen assurance as he had shown in fencing in the free range. He wasn't noisy or bold about it; but somehow he managed to keep the girl's attention fixed upon himself. And we of the gang had been waiting for six long hours for a chance to have her look at us and talk to us. Before we quite realized it, he was offering cheeky plans for the girl's entertainment during her visit—plans in which he was always conspicuously present. He began to get on our nerves. Even Steve was not attending to his dinner with his habitual hearty abandon.

Red McGee made a sturdy effort to break Morrison's corner.

"Say," he said, with no particular relevance, but in his deepest bass, "you know that there storm they call the 'white death,' that comes on the Laramie Plains, where the wind's full o' them there ice-needles, an' it's sure death to draw in your breath?—

freezes your lungs stiff. Well, I was out in one o' them storms oncet, three days."

There came a brief diversion, all eyes turning to see what had incited this sudden outburst. Steve betrayed the irritation that was coming upon him.

"You held your breath three days?" he asked, hitting the obvious weakness in Red's budding narrative. "You better try holdin' it a while now."

Black's Jim raised his comical eye from his plate. "Mebbe that explains why Red's such a dead one," he hinted mildly.

Anyone will see that that was a promising start for some lively talk. Elizabeth's face kindled and her eyes danced with expectancy. But Morrison put the blight of his purring monologue upon it.

"As I was saying, Miss Webster"—and he went on with his scheme for a several days' outing in his mountain wagon, with The Boss and the mistress included and the rest of us left out. He knew the Wyoming code better than that, too.

Steve was alone in the bunkhouse when I entered, after an hour or so, and he was doing some hard sulking over his pipe.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked, when less direct methods had failed to stir him to speech.

"Him!" he growled.

"Morrison?" I said. "What have you got against him?"

"Nothin'," he returned shortly; "nothin' but hard feelin's."

"But you had her all morning."

He made no answer to that, but brooded for a time in disgruntled silence. Then he bestirred himself to wakefulness.

"Billy, lend me some writin'-paper. Mine's plumb gone." From his trunk he brought a thick, square, pale blue envelope, brushed the rubbish from the card-table and sat down with pen and ink before him.

"I reckon I'll fix up a few lines for Miss Kate Buckley," he said gravely.

IX

MRS. PULSITILLA MCGEE

FOR four absorbed hours Steve toiled at his letter-writing with the air of one tinkering with destiny. Sometimes I dozed over my book, arousing each time to find him still deeply intent, his big arms spread out upon the table, his head bent low. The boys drifted in, one by one, and there was a fitful murmur of full-fed talk; but he gave no heed. Dusk drew on, and from the direction of the house came the sound of voices. Black's Jim craned his neck to look out of the eastward window.

"Company's goin'," he said. "Look at old Puff-Ball holdin' her hand! She ain't pullin' away none, either, Steve. An' will you look at him gettin' on his hawss! Climbs like a rhinoceros. Well, so long, Fatty! Horrible sorry you got to pull out."

Steve took no notice save to rasp his boots upon the floor before he dipped a new penful of ink. Darkness deepened and the lamp was lit, but his industry showed no signs of abating. He was giving his best thought to this far-off unknown, while the charming Elizabeth was probably sitting at ease near at hand. It seemed freakishly unlike him; I could make neither head nor tail of it. There was nothing to do but wait.

A horse came along the lane presently, and we heard someone dismount and tie his beast to the rack before the door. Then Swede Nick blundered in, belated, as usual, on the trail.

"Hullo!" he hailed us, with a foolish grin, and sat down on the edge of the wood-box, cracking his big knuckles. "I guess mebbe I not start off Lusk soon enough. Mebbe I stay here all night."

Nobody made any particular demonstration over the news, though he was welcome, as any wayfarer would have been. Another man would have put his horse up in the barn forthwith; but—also as usual—Nick was waiting to be told.

"They got a new knife-thrower up to the hotel," he announced by and bye, as a bit of neighborhood gossip. (A "knife-thrower," be it known, is parlance for waitress; and any new girl might turn out an acquisition.) "She come yeste'd'y," Nick droned.

"What's she like?" somebody asked.

"Purty fair," the Swede grinned. "She's a nigger." Which was the nearest approach the big lubber ever made to a show of mental initiative. Our feebly dawning interest flickered out in disgust. When he had loafed a while longer he began a search through his pockets for cigarette materials, producing instead a much scrawled letter. He stared at it blankly for a moment before his slow glance sought out Red McGee.

"Mebbe I purty nigh forget 'em," he said. "Rennick he tol' me to fetch it, because it come Monday, an' it got mix in the wrong pouch; an' Rennick he say it was wrote 'hurry quick' on it, an' he tol' me——"

But Red had pounced upon him, torn the letter from his grasp, and was already holding the open sheet in the lamplight while he read. It was not a long letter, but he read it through thrice, his hand shaking. At the last his face was crimson and in his eyes was the shifty look of conscious guilt. Something was up.

He stuffed the letter into his rearward pocket and did an offhand bit of whistling; but his affectation was a conspicuous failure, as we knew by reason of his soon bursting into that nerve-stretching singing of his. If Red McGee should have a place in the heavenly choir, the pain of damnation will have its compensations. The sound was the first thing that had stirred Steve out of his preoccupation. His boots scraped uneasily upon the floor for a moment or two; then his pen halted.

"Sufferin' Peter!" he cried between his gritted teeth. "Somebody go get the pain-killer, quick!"

The suggestion bore good fruit; for from the concealment of his bunk Red drew forth a squat, square-shouldered,

mahogany-hued bottle bearing a most attractive label and breathing Olympian odors. He put the neck to his lips, as a friendly sign, and our eyes saw that the bottle was not tilted high, in token of ebb tide within, but held low, as a full bottle should be. When he had tasted, Red sent it from hand to hand around the eager circle, and the frets of the day declined to a lesser magnitude.

Only Steve, bending again to his task, and sitting out of arm's reach at his table, had been missed. Red took another, a more deliberate and a deeper taste, then got up and walked across the room.

"Steve," he said simply.

Steve looked up, and a wistful quiver twitched the corners of his lips, but he shook his head.

"I expect I won't have none," he said.

"What?" Red questioned. "It's whisky."

"It's sure got most o' the marks," Steve agreed. "But I got this here letter to do, an' my mother'd be distressed to death if she caught the smell from me breathin' on the paper. I reckon I better not, Red."

The solemn audacity of the man held Red for a moment open-mouthed. "Your mother?" he blurted. "Your grandmother!" He retreated to his bunk and took still another taste before setting the bottle down in the middle of the floor, where all might reach it. His glance returned to the bland Steve, and his plodding wits grew argumentative.

"A man don't set an' chaw his pen none when he's writin' to his mother," he pronounced judicially; and again, with unexpected acuteness: "A hawss-back ride must be turrible weakenin' to the system."

Red bore his accustomed part in the morning chores and at breakfast. Then we lost sight of him until we were setting forth to put the last touches to the new ditch.

"Hullo! Where's Red goin'?" Steve asked suddenly; and there was McGee, gay in new hat, white collar

and Scotch plaid suit, throwing his clean-booted foot over the saddle in the barnyard. Evidently he did not mean to join us.

"He wanted a day off," The Boss explained. "He's goin' up to Lusk. One of his times, I reckon. He drew all his pay."

A puzzled frown was upon Steve's face; but in a flash it cleared away.

"Billy, come along!" he cried, and ran toward the bunkhouse.

"If it's only true!" There was a frenzy of eagerness upon him. He had seemed wholly engrossed with his own affairs last night; but now he disclosed his capacity for deceptiveness. "Red stuck that letter in his hip-pocket, an' then he begun with his bottle. Chances are before he got through he clear disremembered where he put the letter. If he did—" We were at the bunkhouse door. "There's his overalls—them bow-legged ones. The right behind pocket. Oh, glory!" And there, sure enough, was the letter, bearing in one corner of the envelope:

Ret. in 3 days to Mrs. Pulsitilla Schwartz, Hill City Kan.

Shamelessly we took possession of it, and shamelessly we read it. Here it is, that you may share our shame:

BERT DEAR: Well I been thinking about what you say since your letter come and I am willing though it seems funny my not haveing seen you or you me, but then the chances of geting along together are I suppose about the same any way so I am comeing leaveing here Friday and getting to Lusk the agent says next Monday, so you can meet me then and we will be married right off. Now Bert there are some things I ought to told you I suppose though they will not make much difference you being *reasonable*. I have told you about my other husbands, the last one dead only 8 months, but I suppose he is as dead in that long as he ever will be, so no hinderance, and the rest I can not tell you easy with writeing so will have it for a surpris for you at Lusk. I have sold out everything here and bought my ticket to start Friday so do not disapoint me, as I know you wont, and so no more at present from your loveing sweetheart.

I will do my best to make a good wife to you Bert I surely will.

MRS. PULSITILLA SCHWARTZ.

Unmixed joy was in our hearts as we bore the letter down to the barn. The Boss read it through aloud.

"Monday—today!" he said, and sent his glance after the figure of the bridegroom, just passing from view beyond the creek. Then he displayed that quickness of decision which had made him a winner in Wyoming.

"Get saddled up, boys—hurry! We got to get there first. We can beat him by the east trail. Don't wait for clothes. We'll tell 'em at the house as we go by. *Quick*, now!" And in five minutes we were riding pell-mell upon this new adventure.

We beat Red in, with plenty of time to spare. The bride's train was not due for a full hour. Our plan had worked itself out, with abundant detail, while we rode, and now we scattered to its execution. As I canvass the matter at leisure, after the lapse of time, I realize how brazen and unfeeling and thoroughly contemptible we were; but please remember that such a crisis in the affairs of our circle did not come often.

The typewriter at the land office was pressed into service, and in twenty minutes we had copies of a notice posted conspicuously everywhere—at both saloons, at the hotel, on the telegraph poles and the hitching posts—everywhere; and meanwhile every man of us was talking with all his might to every passer-by. Within half an hour all Lusk knew the news. The typewritten notice ran thus:

I am going to be married on Tuesday at Odd Fellows' Hall, and I request all my friends to come without further invitation. After the wedding I'm going to settle down and be good, but until then I'll settle up for all drinks taken by the ladies and gentlemen of Lusk, not more than three apiece, bar-keepers' count. Come one, come all.

RED MCGEE.

It was a crude performance, every man having his hand in it; but it satisfied us while throwing Lusk into a transport. There remained then nothing but to wait for Red; and in a few minutes our sentinel came in to report: "He's comin'!"

We knew his habit, unvaried through

two years. If he lived up to it now he would ride straight to Holsapple's place and take three fingers of barley malt, neat, to wash away the trail dust. After that there was no forecasting his doings; but so much was humanly certain. So we conspirators crowded into the alley back of Holsapple's, where we had the vantage of an open window. Black's Jim was posted where he could keep cautious account.

"Here he is!" Jim whispered huskily. "He's bellied up to the bar! He's takin' it!" The watcher beckoned with his finger, and softly we grouped ourselves where we could see and hear.

Red was standing with one boot on the foot-rail, wiping his mustache casually on the back of his hand, and the barkeeper lounged upon his shirt-sleeved arms.

"Wasn't hardly expectin' you yet a while," he said.

Red cleared his throat. "Just thought I'd drop in," he returned off-hand.

"Anything doin' down Rawhide way?"

"Turrible quiet," Red responded. "Seems right brisk up here, though. I ain't saw so many folks on the street in Lusk since I been around. Anything goin' on?"

"Why, ain't you heard the news?" the barkeeper queried. "Lord, you'd orter keep posted. Read that notice over there on the wall."

Red stood before the typewritten placard and began slowly to spell it out. We slipped around to the front door and filed in, one by one, quietly falling into position. He was more than ordinarily slow today; he plodded through the notice to the last word before he seemed to grasp its import.

"What the h—l!" he spluttered. "Who done this? Tommy, you—" He wheeled suddenly and caught sight of us; then stood transfixed, staring.

Had we been fewer in number there would have been a fight. He bristled and swelled with dumb, blind rage, the veins of his neck and forehead grew

purple. In the first rigor he tore his new hat from his head and dashed it upon the floor, trampling it with his spurred heels. Twice, thrice he opened his lips, but no words would come and he turned to the door, then halted and came back slowly, sheepishly.

"What's the good!" he muttered, and developed a half-abashed and half-proud grin. "You got me hobbled. Tommy, set it out."

Never mind the immediate sequence. It was an engine whistle, far and faint, that suddenly took the color from Red's cheeks and the grin from his lips.

"There she comes!" he gasped. "I got to hustle down. See you fellers later."

But that would never do, and in solemn procession we went out to the sidewalk and filed in the bridegroom's wake to the railroad-station.

Disappointment awaited us. A couple of commercial travelers dismounted from the train; then two or three cattlemen, home from market; then a roly-poly, middle-aged woman with a brace of half-grown children; then a few odds and ends of Lusk folk, returning from various errands down the road. Evidently there were no more to come. Blankly we glanced at one another as the train jarred into motion. There was no bride here.

"Mebbe she come by freight," Steve suggested. "Go ask Dick, Red. She might've got in this mornin' from Crawford. Go on!"

And Red went obediently. A goodly company of townfolk had gathered in the little waiting-room, and more were arriving each moment—more and more, by twos and threes. The travelers had dispersed, with the exception of the middle-aged woman and her children, who were getting their belongings together in a corner.

"Have you saw a woman today, Dick?" Red inquired, quite carelessly, of the youth beyond the ticket window.

The boy looked up briefly from his tissue train sheets.

"Nothin' to speak of," he grinned.

"Lost one? What name does she go by?"

Red shifted his weight to the other foot. "There was a Mrs. Schwartz," he began awkwardly, but got no further; for the middle-aged woman had come from her corner and stood at his elbow.

"Be you lookin' for Mrs. Schwartz?" she inquired. "I'm her."

Red turned, looked, and caught at the ticket shelf for support. "Not Mrs.——" he said in a dry whisper. "I reckon——"

"And is your name McGee?" she pursued.

That clinched it. She was Pulsittilla.

While they two stood gazing at each other, in voiceless fascination, we had time to appraise her. She was a queer, quaint little figure, aged by fifteen years since that drop-stitch photograph was taken. She had discarded her curled false front, and her hair, streaked somewhat with gray, was gathered primly back in a tight knot beneath the edge of her shapeless straw bonnet. A quaint figure, I have said; but in point of fact she had none at all, being of such outline as suggested nothing so much as a noontime shadow at midsummer. Two points there were in her favor: her cheeks wore a wholesome apple-bloom, and her eyes were still warm and kindly, despite her varied experience.

She grew embarrassed under such fixed scrutiny; her glance dropped and she began to pluck nervously at her skirt. The two children came to her side, staring open-mouthed. At sight of them Red was galvanized out of his trance.

"Whose are them? Your'n?" he demanded.

"Yes, they're mine," she admitted demurely. "This one's Alfred, an' this one's Gracie. I guess— They was what I meant in my letter. I was goin' to tell you about them children when I seen you."

"Was you?" Red returned blankly. "That was right thoughtful of you."

She stiffened a little at his tone.

"Of course," she said, "I ought to told you before now. If you don't want to take me, with them, you got a right to back out. You can just say so, an' I'll go back where I come from; or mebbe I can get a job here somewheres. You can just fix it to suit yourself."

In dumb appeal Red turned to the circle of spectators; but we had no help to offer, and he took momentary shelter in subterfuge.

"You wait here a while," he said. "I expect I got to go an' make arrangements." And he went boldly out and up the road, with the gang at his heels.

At Holsapple's place he leaned feebly against the bar, pushed back his hat and wiped the clammy moisture from his brow upon his sleeve. A stiff drink passed his pale lips before he spoke a word.

"Boys, I'm up against it, good an' rank," he said, so wretchedly that we honestly pitied him. "Tommy, you leave that bottle set till I tell you." Another drink, and another, and he drew his drooping figure erect. "No, sir! It's a brace game, an' I don't play it." He drew from inside his shirt a crumpled roll of bills and threw them upon the bar before The Boss. "There's eighty dollars there," he said briefly. "You're in this. You take that to her an' fix it up with her. I'm goin' to hike out; I'm goin' to make a heap o' trail between now an' mornin'."

Before anybody could move to stop him he had gone out to the hitching rack, flung himself upon his pony and disappeared in a blur of gray dust.

"Well!" The Boss breathed; and so we all felt. What were we to do? That was not a question to be answered offhand, and we sat down at a corner table to its discussion.

There were many words, but no ideas that led anywhere. Two hours passed, and it began to be impressed upon us that we had eaten no dinner. We were getting cross, and with all our hearts we wished we hadn't butted in. Then, just when things looked bluest, Red's pony galloped up to the rack and

Red swaggered in, flushed and triumphant.

"Aw!" he began. "Here, you gimme my money." He tucked the bills again into his shirt and faced us boldly. "Go on with your weddin' business," he said. "I'm goin' to Douglas on the night freight for the license."

"Red!" The Boss got up and shook McGee's hand warmly, while the rest of us were near to collapse with sheer relief.

"You ain't goin' to do it, sure?" Steve asked.

"It'd be pretty low-down to play it on a woman," Red declared; and we knew that his conclusion was formed out of his untaught chivalry. "I'm goin' to marry her an' take chances," he declared. "We'll hang out here till I find somethin' else to do. What I got an' what she's got'll keep us goin' a spell. You boys go ahead with your arrangements. I'm goin' down to have a little private talk with the widder."

And thus it happened that on Tuesday, according to schedule and with all the ceremony Lusk could muster, the estate of matrimony took on a third dimension for Mrs. Pulsitilla Schwartz. It was withal a most hilarious proceeding, defiant of precedent. Lusk got its money's worth; and the best part of all was when Red stood by, swelling with pride and importance, while his lady, coy and conscious, cast down her eyes and turned her apple cheek to our salutes till it glowed again.

Then they got their reward, such as it was. A ranchman's buggy stood at the curb. We bundled them into it, with the two wondering children, caught up the empty shafts and moved in a yelling concourse through the streets to a tiny cottage at the edge of town, where we marched them to the door. The rent was paid for a month in advance; within were a few trifles in the way of beds and tables, stools and candlesticks; and the pantry had been "grubbed" for the length of a decent honeymoon.

And there we left them staring after

us as we beat a yelling retreat—a comical tableau; the bandy-legged Red, with his arm about the waist of his bunchy Pulsitilla, and the two astonished children gaping on either side; and Cupid standing somewhere near, most likely, wishing he had a sleeve to laugh in.

X

STEVE & CUPID, LTD.

OUR serio-comic wedding was rounded out to our satisfaction, whatever the little god might think of it. We had eaten of the best that Lusk could furnish, in celebration, and were assembled again at Holsapple's, relaxing from our efforts and getting ready for the homeward ride in the morning.

Relaxation had various aspects, according to the temper of the man seeking it. Two or three had sat down to the roulette wheel, early in the evening, keeping at the game persistently, excepting only in those brief moments when they came to The Boss to request a little further advance on account. Swede Nick, after the crass manner of his kind, had bought a cheap pint, retreated with it to a corner, and with brutal precipitation put himself forthwith into a state of sodden lethargy. Black's Jim was playing the prodigal prince, as usual, for a wide circle of penniless retainers. Steve, The Boss and I sat out of the hurly-burly, tasting temperate cigars and looking on philosophically.

Steve had not touched a drop all day. That was the chief secret of his charm as a companion—one never could predicate his behavior five minutes ahead. He had thrown himself apparently heart and soul into the riot of the wedding performance; but now he was curiously reserved. There was no indication of the cause; but the effect was conspicuous: he did not open his lips save to deliver an epigrammatic sentence of comment upon the tumultuous spectacle.

"Jim's bad eye'll be twins pretty soon," he said once; and, again, when

somebody demanded of the barkeeper a "Skik-kotch" high-ball, "You could make a mint o' money, Billy, if you could invent a drink that nobody could get too drunk to pronounce. These boys would all be hollerin' for it in a half-hour." And yet again, when somebody else had given a sign of his overstimulated helplessness, "When Pete comes to explain his looks tomorro', he'll swear the sidewalk bucked him off, goin' home. He couldn't walk on a dirt road, could he, unless it was spiked down!"

A cowman at the bar was accomplishing a slow narrative, with much detail, concerning one of his mishaps in horsemanship. His last words reached us: "—but the cinch busted, an' I done one o' these here boneless flops, an' my shoulders hit the ground, an' pretty soon here come my legs an' piled up on top o' me."

The Boss got out of his chair, stretching his arms above his head and yawning.

"Well, bed for me," he said. "They've been harder days than work; but I'm certainly glad we came."

When he was gone Steve, too, pushed back his chair.

"Let's get out o' this, Billy," he muttered. "Let's go walk around some in the cool."

Outside, with the night air refreshing us, he struck a leisurely pace, turning away from the centre of town and into the path that led to the top of the hill where the waterworks reservoir was perched. His cigar glowed intermittently. After a moment he threw it away with a gesture of irritation.

"Things don't taste good, somehow," he said shortly.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked.

"Oh, nothin'. It's just one o' the times when thinkin' takes the freshness off the flavor—you know." He was silent until we stood leaning against the iron railing that inclosed the reservoir. He picked up a handful of pebbles and dropped them one by one into the water, listening abstractedly to their faint "plug-plug." He

tired of that presently, and stood with his chin in his hands, lounging over the rail.

"Well," he remarked mildly, "I've wrote to Miss Kate Buckley."

"Oh, have you?"

"Yes. I mailed her this mornin'." And after a pause: "She was sure a right good letter. I'd like to be around when she gets her."

"Well, go on if you're going to," I prompted when the ensuing silence grew long.

"I ain't sayin' anything," he returned listlessly, and there was another interlude, which lasted for several minutes. It was Steve who spoke:

"That Miss Webster, she's certainly a nice girl, ain't she?"

"Oh, you bigamist!" I said.

He broke into a low chuckle; and the chuckle persisted in a manner out of all keeping with the trite humor of the charge. He seemed to find it vastly amusing.

"Bigamist!" he echoed. "Bigamist! Yes, I expect that's what the Lord made me for; an' He certainly knew His business when He was doin' it. If Miss Buckley——"

"For heaven's sake, Steve, which one of them are we talking about?"

"Both." His chuckle broke out afresh. "That's what I'm tellin' you. Seems like I never could think about women an' keep my thoughts cinched onto just one; there's got to be two or three, anyway, an' sometimes it's the whole bunch." Little by little this lighter mood passed, and when next he spoke it was with notable sobriety of tone and manner.

"Billy, honest now, if I was in shape do you know what I'd do? I'd just cut loose an' use up a lot o' plain English on that girl—Miss Webster, I mean. I'd sling my rope. I'd fix it so she'd have to duck or run for it or else get tied down. I'm tellin' you." There was no doubting his absolute sincerity.

"Steve!" I cried. "Well, then! What are you fooling around for? If you feel so— You're not afraid?"

"Afraid!" he scoffed. "I ain't afraid o' nothin'. But I'm wise. I can't

help thinkin' what I'd look like when the see-ance was done. Me! I ain't a plumb fool." He was speaking in crisp sentences, with short, impatient intervals. "Don't I know the dif'rence? Would she look at me?"

"Oh, as to that! If I remember, she has looked at you a time or two."

"Talk sense; I'm tryin' to, myself, though it ain't so damned easy. But don't I know what I amount to? An' don't you reckon she's had her chances, before now?"

"Steve, you're a coward."

"Billy, you're a liar!"

"But this is so unlike you."

"Yes, I know it is. And that's just what makes me know it's most likely right."

"Steve, you told me once, down at the round-up, that if you ever found the right one you wouldn't let anything stand in your way."

"Don't I know what I told you? But that was before an' this is after. There's always a right smart o' dif'rence."

"Steve, do you want to know what I think?"

"No, I don't. I wouldn't give a pinch o' sand to know what you think; but I'd give a month's pay to see what you'd do if you was me."

"I know what I'd do. If I loved her——"

"Oh, hush! Shucks!" The very word appeared to throw him into a delicious sort of confusion.

"Well, isn't that what you're driving at? If I loved her, I'd see it through. You say you reckon she's had her chances before now. But she hasn't taken any of them, has she? Don't you suppose that means she's waiting for the right one, too? How do you know——?"

"Oh, let up! You're only reasonin' it out. I could do that myself, if I wanted to squander my time. You ain't *feelin'* it. She wouldn't figure it it out your way, if it was up to her. She'd *feel* it; an' when she got through it'd be an early fall an' a hard winter for little old Steve. What if she has looked at me, an' gone ridin' with me,

an' such-like? That don't signify nothin'. It's just human for a healthy woman to act that way with any man she meets up with, so long as he's got life in him to move round. But if it come to—to—that other, you know darn well, Billy, what would happen. My friends would have to come an' melt me out o' the ice with bonfires."

"Now who's reasoning things out?"

"I'm sayin' what I know. Why, look at it! What am I? A cow-puncher that knows how to cook some; that's all—a plumb cow-puncher. An' what have I got? A patch o' good sagebrush land an' a bunch o' cows it'd be a joke to call a herd. Mind, I ain't sayin' I ain't goin' to have more an' get ahead some, because I am, give me time. Five year from now I'm goin' to give low-jack to some o' these smarties. They'll be talkin' right respectful of the 'Brainard outfit.' Now you hear me! But you know you can't tell that kind o' things to a girl when she invites you to explain what sort of a man you are before she says 'yes.' You know you can't."

"No, that's true," I agreed. "You're right, of course. The only thing for you to do is to sit by, as you're doing, and lament your luck until some chap like that Morrison steps in and takes her—some honest fellow that's a *man*, that knows what love means and that can make a girl like her happy."

It was a pretty fair shot, considering the darkness; I knew by his harsh snort that I had rung a bull's-eye.

"Morrison!" he growled, with that passionate purr in his voice. "Damn you, Billy!" Consideration of the girl was abated for the moment, while he spoke his mind freely concerning this potential rival. "I been hatin' that fat, slick thief for five year. I don't know now what there was to it, at first; I reckon it was just kind o' promiscuous, because he was *him*. There may've been something in it; but 'most any reason for hatin' a man gets pretty stale after that long, an' I was gettin' over it some till Sunday, an' then it come back on me fierce. Him!" He

struck his hands together and stood erect, squaring his big shoulders. "Billy, if I thought—" He paused abruptly, taking himself well in hand, as though he feared he had already betrayed far too much. "Forget it!" he said lightly. "I always talk foolish outdoors at night. I ain't in the same class with her, that's all. But, say, didn't that Miss Kate Buckley's first letter make a hit with you?"

Impatiently I turned to descend the path. It was evident that Steve & Cupid meant to run their affairs as a close corporation.

XI

"MY MIND'S FAILIN'"

FOR the rest of the week we were very busy, with no time for more asides, sentimental or otherwise. Steve did not seem to mind the deprivation. He was evidently grateful for the chance meetings with Elizabeth at meal-times, but he made no undue effort to bring them about or to prolong them when they came; and between times he was quite content in our company.

On Sunday morning Morrison came again with his mountain outfit and bore away The Boss, the mistress and our girl for a three or four days' outing, provided the weather held. Steve chafed a little as he watched them ride away together, Elizabeth on the driver's seat with Old Fatty, but once they were out of sight he recovered his mental balance with surprising ease, and the dinner he got for us was an achievement. From the untrammelled gaiety of his manner one would have declared that some rare good fortune was hanging tangibly above him. Now and again, while she was gone, he spoke of her with warmth in our intimate talks, but always with an apparently impersonal and merely friendly feeling. He showed no trace of impatience for her return, nor could the boys provoke him from his calm by their raillery. Had he then given

her up definitely and finally? He had me guessing.

And there was occasion for more guessing when she returned. We men were afield when the party arrived, and there was no meeting until supper-time. Then Steve came in late, after the rest of us had made a good beginning, and took his seat across from Elizabeth.

It is not easy to give a clear impression of what followed. Something had happened since Sunday, injecting a new element into the girl's relations with my friend. He was his accustomed self, with his every faculty at its best. The change was in her. It would be too much to say that she was reserved or frosty, but there was about her an impalpable something which for want of a better name must be called an atmosphere, perceptible only to the sixth sense. Her laughter lacked the final note, now and then her habitually ready wit was the least bit tardy, her presence of mind the least fraction unreliable, and her exquisite color would mount without discoverable cause. Could it be that Morrison—? But that was absurd! She was far too gently disposed, I thought, to have let him run the danger of hurting himself by kicking against the pricks. No, it must be something else.

Whatever it was, Steve appeared to be utterly and happily unaware of it. Throughout the hour he shone, brilliantly, virilely; it was good to hear the ring of his deep voice and to see the glow and flash of his eyes. He was fine that night, and his rapturous humor endured when he was with us at the bunkhouse—endured until late bedtime.

His reason cropped out after breakfast the next morning, when I ran across him as he came from the barnyard leading two saddled horses. He halted for a word, and I saw in his eyes that shine which betokened an exalted state of mind. Whenever he was bent upon something out of the ordinary, whether good or evil, that shine would be there.

"Billy, can you pray?" he asked abruptly, whimsically.

"Yes. 'Now I lay me——'"

"That's one all right—as good as any, I expect. You just keep sayin' it over for me, will you—till I get back?"

"Steve! Are you going to—? Look here; tell me!"

But he was going toward the house, laughing at me over his shoulder. "Never you mind my end of it. You keep a-prayin', like I tell you. I'm goin' to be too busy."

The start was not altogether auspicious. Watching from the barn I saw him lead the horses to the back porch and stand there for a time, talking to someone within the kitchen; then he sat down upon the step, holding the bridle reins in his hand and keeping on with his talk; and at last he hitched the beasts to a tree and went inside. I forgot all about my friendly prayers, hunted about in the hay shed until I had found a couple of hens' nests, and straggled up to the house with the eggs. I simply had to know what was going forward.

The mistress was washing the breakfast dishes, and Elizabeth, her trim figure enveloped in a big gingham apron, was wiping them and leisurely putting them away in the cupboard, while Steve stood nearby, his shoulders resting against the wall, his hat in his hand and a look of grim resolve upon his face, only indifferently concealed by his careless smile.

"We're losing the best part of the day," he was saying as if in argument. "You wouldn't have to do no fixin' up. Come like you are now."

"And besides," Elizabeth returned, as though she, too, had been debating the matter, "there are some letters I really *must* write. I've been putting them off for days."

"Then you can put 'em off two more hours. You can explain it to 'em. There'll be snow an' bad days pretty soon, with all kinds o' time for letter-writin'. Come on!"

The warm-hearted little mistress looked up from her dishpan with an enjoying laugh.

"You might go for an hour or so, Bess. You can turn back if you get too tired."

"Sure!" Steve cried heartily. "I'll fetch you back the minute you say. Go get your hat."

So she capitulated, stripping off her apron and running upstairs for the inevitable touches to her toilet. Steve was radiant. He dropped his hat to the floor, put his arms about the mistress's waist in a bearish hug, then turned her face upward with gentle force and kissed her.

"You're all right, Molly!" he said softly.

To be abroad that morning was like being immersed in a warm bath of rarefied gold, perfumed as for a queen. There was no wind, no cloud—nothing but mellow, calm glory, turning mere existence into a sort of triumph. Belated meadow-larks were bubbling over with ecstasy among the alfalfa stubble; mountain jays screamed lustily from the cottonwoods along the creek; even the melancholy cry of the killdeer, borne from the cactus patches, had music in it.

Steve was silent until the last of the wire fences had been passed, and they were riding across the open plain toward the cool, dark pile of Middle Butte; but there was nothing moody in his silence, nothing like discontent. He was still flushed with his victory over the girl's reluctance, his lips faintly smiling his delight; he was chivalrously willing to wait upon her convenience or whim in the matter of beginning the talk.

She was in no hurry, apparently. It was enough that she could feast her senses upon the soft splendors of the day. Steve was wise in letting her be; for the warmth and brilliance and the faint scent of the far pines made a specific for whatever disturbance of mind she had known. The rhythm of her horse's even, easy swing got into her heart. Soon she was crooning a vagrant fragment of melody, half under her breath; and when that was done she turned and looked him full in the eyes. Then she laughed.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"Ridin'," Steve answered. "You see, I ain't botherin' any to make my hawss go anywhere in particular. It ain't the gettin' anywhere that I'm thinkin' about now; it's just the goin'."

"And why did you insist upon my coming?"

He returned her laugh softly. "Oh, I don't know. It's curious, ain't it, the things a man will do?"

"But why today so especially?"

"Because today was *here*."

"Don't be light-minded, Mr. Steve."

A quick change came upon him, and the glance he gave her made her vaguely regret those last words.

"All right, Miss Elizabeth," he said boldly. "I can be serious, if you want me to. That's what I come out for with you—partly. I brought you because outdoors is where you seem to belong, a day like this, an' because I wanted to have you where I could look at you an' talk to you an' be with you. There's more reasons, too, if you want 'em."

But those seemed amply to suffice her. A wave of vivid color swept over her cheeks and brow, and she stirred nervously in her saddle.

"You are becoming positively frivolous," she declared. "Here, if you want to be with me so much, see if you can keep up with me to that rock yonder."

She touched her beast upon the flank and dashed at top speed toward a granite boulder that had rolled down from the mountain and lay half buried in the sand three-quarters of a mile ahead.

The other horse would have followed this lead, as a matter of course; but Steve checked him, holding him to his leisurely lope. A sly smile was upon the man's lips. Once the girl glanced backward over her shoulder to see how the race fared, but she kept on with no slackening of the pace she had set. It was a full five minutes before Steve rejoined her. He had figured that that would be ample time for the recovery of her composure. She was sitting quite at ease, letting her animal crop the scant grass at the rock's base.

"Why weren't you game?" she challenged.

He laughed his lazy, deep laugh. "I expect you'd have beat me anyway," he drawled. "A lady mostly does, on a short dash like that. If it was a long ride, now—a real long one, one that was goin' to last for——"

She pulled sharply upon her rein, making her horse wheel and dance. He dropped from his saddle and stood at her side.

"We'll set here a minute," he announced, "an' let Baldy get his breath. He'll need it when he comes to make the climb I'm goin' to take you." He held out his hand to assist her, and because she could not do otherwise she dismounted. Steve let the bridle reins trail, and they sat down with their shoulders against the sun-warmed rock.

"Now which way am I goin' to be allowed to talk?" he inquired.

She made an impatient little sound with her tongue. "Why need you talk at all?" she demanded. "It's so nice just to sit still and think."

"There's heaps o' time for keepin' still, when you ain't here," he said mildly. "I do keep still, weeks an' weeks, when there's anything to keep still about. I'll tell you: I can talk just kind o' halfway between, if you want me to. There was a right good crop o' calves on the range this year. I notice the gophers are tearin' up that lower alfalfa piece, somethin' fierce. Old Ring an' that young new hound dug out a badger yeste'd'y, over on the windmill flat, an' the pup's nose is nigh wore out where she clawed him. Let's see, now——"

The girl was biting her lip, trying hard not to laugh. Then of her own volition she brought their speech back to intimate grounds.

"You ought to know that a woman doesn't care to listen to pretty nonsense from a man when she knows—when she thinks he has probably said the same things, in just the same way, a hundred times before, to other women. This cow-country gallantry——"

He turned his face away, that she might not see how his lips twitched and his eyes flashed with delight. He waited a moment before he answered, in a tone of grave contriteness:

"Other women! Yes, I expect you've certainly got me there, some. I have rode with other women, dif'rent times, when they come a-visitin' round, an' I ain't tryin' to make you believe I was sorry to be obliged to be with 'em. You've got too much sense to believe that. I always did like to be with a woman, if she was worth it. But I'm goin' to ask you to believe this other I want to tell you. Since you come——"

She got up resolutely and moved toward her horse. "You said you'd take me back when I wanted to go," she said. "We'll go now, please."

"No, not yet," he urged. "There's another o' my places I want to show you. Mebbe there won't be more chances, with the weather. You come. I'll keep my mouth shut—this time. I'll let you lead the talkin', an' I'll give my word just to trail along behind. There! You come. I ain't ever took no other woman to this place, an' I want you to see it."

It was to his park that he led her, by a wild trail known only to himself, turning and twisting back and forth among the dark pines and the jutting rocks, until after an hour's hard climbing they were at the very summit of the somber mass.

A world-old solemnity was in the still air of the place, a deep, religious hush which the whispered sigh of the pines did not break. There were no such trees below—straight, stalwart columns, hoary with years but mighty with undying youth, their black-green crowns massed close and hiding all save tiny, shimmering spangles of the brilliant sky. Grim walls of rock shut this spot in; but the earth was carpeted with thick, luxuriant grasses, matted with deep moss and decked with a wealth of life, and in some mad caprice Nature had set a flowing spring in the very heart of the glade, the limpid water bubbling musically up through

a bed of black mica grains, that shone like fire jewels as they stirred in the living current. To enter this nook from the parched plain below was like stepping into another world.

Here, too, Steve bared his head as he stood looking about with grave, deep eyes.

"Here's where I come to church," he said softly, "times when I need it—once in a year or so. We come in by the main door. I'll show you another one when we go out. An' here's the holy water." He knelt beside the murmuring spring, made her give him her drinking cup, filled it and passed it to her hand. "You're the only livin' woman that's tasted out of it," he said quietly. Then a quick fancy seized him. "Take off your hat," he commanded; and when she had obeyed he stooped again, dipped his hand in the basin and shook the shining drops from his fingers upon the red-gold mass of her hair, where they clung like enmeshed gems. In a flash of daring he laid his hand for the briefest instant upon her hair's soft glory, feeling his every fiber thrill with the delirious joy of the contact. She drew away, but gently, and he saw that there was no fear or confusion now in her eyes.

"Your sins are all plumb gone now," he said, with an effort at lightness. "Look yonder. Do you see that black old rock, the other side o' that bush tangle? It's shaped for all the world like a church pulpit. There's where the Almighty stands an' preaches to me."

She was regarding him with a look he could not fathom. "Does He?" she asked gently. "What does He say to you?"

He flushed like a boy. "I expect you'd laugh; it's so rank foolish."

She shook her head in dissent. "Tell me!" she insisted.

"Shucks! But He always seems to talk mighty good sense. That's what makes me think it ain't just my own arguin'. Have you ever figured it out why He shouldn't talk to folks, if He's a mind to? 'You be quiet, Steve'—

that's what I get sometimes. 'You be quiet, now, an' quit your fool frettin' about things, till I get ready.' That's the most of it. Mebbe it's the feel o' the place, an' mebbe it ain't; I don't know." He stood suddenly erect, his face kindling with deep feeling. "Listen!" he cried; "listen with all your might!"

A wind was coming, risen from somewhere out of the fathomless distance. The pines down the mountain were crying with the exquisite passion of its touch. Nearer it swept in its strong, stately movement; nearer and nearer, until the dusky roof of the tree plumes caught its first breath and stirred in majestic rhythm.

"Now, *listen!*" Steve shouted; and on the instant the mountain trembled under a deep, booming peal of sound, reverberant, titanic. For the space of a dozen heart-beats it rang out, awakening a bellowing thunder of echoes among the crags; then, slowly, slowly it died away, falling from its mighty intensity to a soft eolian melancholy as the sudden wind-blast ceased, ending at last in a faint drawn sigh.

A passion of sheer fright was upon the girl; her shaking hands gripped Steve's uplifted arm, her white face was bent upon him.

"Gawd!" he cried. "I'm glad you heard it! That's my church organ. Beats that little old Lusk melodeon, don't it? It's the wind makes it, when it blows just the right way, southwest, through a crooked slash in the rocks. But it's got to hit the place sudden, like it did, or she don't sing. That's the fourth time I've heard it, and the first time it like to scared the heart out o' me."

The girl was standing apart from him now, her calm coming back to her; but her cheeks and lips still wore a profound pallor. Steve had affected not to observe her fright.

"That noise mostly starts the deer up from their bed-ground," he said. "There's three or four of 'em hangs out over here a piece. Want to see 'em?"

But she shook her head. "No—not

now," she said. "We must go down. It's chilly up here."

He did not demur, but led the way to the head of the trail. "I expect we better go down the way we come, an' leave that other way for the next time. This is easier." But at the park's edge he paused, pointing through the pine trunks to the plain outspread below.

"That's cow country, down there," he said. "Don't she look funny, marked off in fussy little squares with them rows o' fence posts up an' down? It's a hard day's ride with a good hawss to where you can see; an' them fence squares will be five or ten miles across. That's what makes me like to come up here—it makes down there look so little an' so no-count." His face grew set as they began the descent. "But that's the land they're fightin' over an' settin' such store by. It don't look worth lyin' an' stealin' an' killin' for, does it?" Then, with his eyes intent upon her face: "But I expect that's what a man's got to do now in this country, or else amount to nothin'. I expect that's what I'll be doin' too, pretty soon."

She turned suddenly to face him, looking at him for a moment fixedly.

"What?" she demanded, with sharp emphasis.

"I'm away behind the game now," he said, as if that would make the matter quite clear to her. "Other men have been gettin' a long start of me, takin' up land them dif'rent ways. There's Morrison. He got started a good bit after me, an' look what he's got. An' there's plenty more like him."

Her beautiful eyes shone with a light that was half angry and half scornful. "Let me see," she said slowly; "what was it you told me you heard from your pulpit back there?—'Be quiet and wait till I get ready'—wasn't that it? Ten minutes ago you told me that; and now you're talking of putting yourself on a level with Morrison!"

A deep, tranquil joy welled in his secret soul. His crafty lure had succeeded so much better than he had dared hope. He could hardly contain the cry that rose to his lips. He sat

down upon a lichened rock and laughed shamefacedly.

"No," he said lamely, "I expect I wasn't—I can't get—I expect I'll wait."

In the privacy of her own room, at mid-afternoon, Elizabeth sat with the mistress—talking in strict confidence.

"Oh, I don't pretend to see through him," she remarked lightly, as if seeking to imply that she was not much concerned. "He was splendid today—if I hadn't known all the time that in reality he's nothing but an outrageous *flirt*."

The mistress smiled demurely. "Yes, he's that, Bess—he's *been* that, I mean."

"No—*is*!" the girl corrected.

"Well, *is*. But that isn't a fatal blemish in a man, is it? And he is a man, deary." And with that the little woman went down to begin her supper, leaving Elizabeth sitting by the window, gazing absently across the wide sand wastes.

Steve was in no such mood when I saw him. Happiness was written so large all over him that I hurried to his side and wrung his hand with feeling. But he released himself, laughing.

"Not yet, Billy! I broke some ground today, mebbe; an' mebbe—tomorro'—I don't know. If my nerve can stand the pull—" His speech was woefully fragmentary and unsatisfying.

The next morning he went abroad again with her, taking an earlier start, but returning crestfallen. He would say nothing at all in explanation. And yet again on the next day he took her with him, coming back obviously shaken and short-tempered, for he shut himself up in the bunkhouse through the entire afternoon, coming out only in answer to the supper-call. Then, when supper was over, he drew me aside for a walk in the lane.

"Billy, it's no use," he said. "I tried my best; but I couldn't make the jump. You'd've thought I was plumb scared the way I shied."

"Steve! Oh, come now!"

"It's Gawd's truth." He dropped into one of his fits of contemplative silence, which lasted until he stood leaning over the lower gate, listening to the chuckle of the water in the irrigating ditch. Then he spoke, with a manner of weariness:

"What's the use, anyway? You know there ain't any." He tried to roll a cigarette in the dark, but his hands were shaking and had lost their cunning. "But I'll tell you," he went on when he had abandoned the effort. "I've thought it all out. I'd plumb set my heart on havin' some prospects by Christmas for—a home; an' I'm goin' to have 'em. Now you keep your mouth shut. Let me tell you: There's that Miss Kate Buckley. Shut up, now, till I get through. Them letters o' her'n—I've set a heap o' store by them. She's the right kind; you can tell that yourself. I've been writin' to her regular, an' she's sensible an' friendly. That's *my* kind. Billy, I'm goin' to ask that girl to marry me."

"Steve Brainard! Of all the—" Words failed me utterly.

"All right. You say what you're a mind to. My mind's failin'—I know that. I'm a fool without any brand on because nobody'll take the trouble to brand me—I know that. I'm goin' up against a girl I never set eyes on in the world—an' the chances are she'll strike me blind when I see her—I know that, too. But I'd just as soon be blind when seein' don't do me no good. Don't make a bit o' dif'rence. I come home this noon, mad and sore at myself plumb through, an' I set down an' wrote an' asked her. Come back to the bunkhouse. I'm goin' to show you the letter. You've got to tell me if she reads all right."

And here is the astounding letter he showed me:

MISS KATE BUCKLEY: I have something I must write to you about although it is not my turn, as you have not answered my last letter, but this is something that will not be put off after a man has got his mind made up to it.

Now I expect if I wanted to I could work around to it easier and better, but do not see the use, so will just say it out plain, and it is this. I want you for my wife.

Now of course you will be a great deal surprised, as I have not let you know in my other letters about my loving you. But I do and I have known about it all along. I could not be any more sure about it if I had known you ever since the year One, and I will tell you how I know.

You have taken a hold of me. I am every day thinking about you and every night dreaming about you, so that I could not get you off my mind if I wanted to nor never will be able to. It is your goodness and your courage and all those things that make a good woman. I know they are all in you as well as if I had known you as long as I say. That is a part of why I love you, and then the rest is because it is you.

I will not expect you to say yes until I have had a chance to talk to you more but I surely have to tell you now.

You will want to know more than you do about what I amount to different ways, and all these things I will tell you, anything you want to ask me, and I will not lie to you. I will just say now there are some things I am sorry about and some others I am glad about and all through I have kept thinking about it and trying to be a man. And now I will not tell you any more about myself only this. Because I love you the way I do you can do anything you like with me so I will be a man all the time with nothing again to be sorry for.

Now I expect I will see you before you have time to answer this letter, which I am glad of because I can surely talk better than I can write and easier so that people will believe me, and especially a woman. Only this could not be said any better and you must believe it written or spoken, I love you.

STEVE BRAINARD.

A sense of sick disgust possessed me when I reached the last line.

"Steve!" I said. "Are you going to send this letter?"

"Is she spelled all right?"

"*Spelled!* Yes! But——"

"Then I'm sure goin' to send her. Give her here."

And that was all I could get out of him.

XII

IT IS ALL OVER

For the next ten days Steve was another man—peevisish, irascible, hard to live with. Nothing pleased him; he was off his feed, and toward the last he sulked in his shell, as unapproachable and as defiant of friendly

advances as a snapping-turtle. I was glad of it, thinking that he was in all probability suffering an advance instalment of the pains of his freakish folly. It served him right; he deserved to suffer.

The weather had undergone a sharp change, too; the summery mildness, which had promised to lap over into next May, had flashed out before a blustering burst of cold wind and snow. Feeding from the alfalfa stacks must soon begin—a thing which no seasoned son of Wyoming looks forward to with joy. Then, once winter had sent his hosts after this first thin line of skirmishers, there would be man's work afield, fighting blizzards and caring for the salvage. But what was perhaps more to the point in Steve's present state of mind, this flurry put it out of the question to go horseback over the country, loitering and sentimentalizing with a girl. I did not put it a bit beyond him to keep on with that performance while he awaited the answer to his letter. In the reaction from single-minded admiration, I deemed him capable of anything.

Furthermore, Elizabeth was beginning to talk of leaving us—not as of a fixed and immutable event, but after the fashion in Wyoming, where the code of hospitality is so elastic that there is no breaking it. Christmas would be coming along presently, she suggested, and she had a lot of shopping to do and gifts to plan for; so she really must take advantage of the first decent day and pay some parting visits around the big neighborhood. That was the way she was talking, and it seemed to put a ragged edge on Steve's grouchy temper.

"I expect I'll be pullin' out o' this for a while myself right soon," he said once in one of those brief intervals when he was using the English language instead of mere beastly growls and mutterings. "I ought to gone last week. I got somethin' to 'tend to at Omaha."

But he did not go, as we heartily wished he would; it seemed to give him

savage delight to hang around and make himself objectionable.

Then there fell, most unexpectedly, another day of heavenly mildness, when he put the saddle on his horse and rode away in the early morning, going aimlessly off for a solitary session with his conscience, no doubt. It happened to be mail day, and when the stage came by at noon I got the Nine-Bar pouch, opened it and sorted over its contents. There was nothing from Miss Kate Buckley, and secretly I rejoiced.

Steve came to the house when dinner was over, glanced casually at the mail rack in the dining-room, helped himself to the half of an apple pie from the kitchen cupboard, and calmly proposed to Miss Elizabeth Webster that she should go with him for a ride—maybe the last one this year, he added, if those clouds gathering in the northwest took a notion to make their bluff good. She agreed gracefully, and away they went.

"We don't want to run foolish chances," Steve said to her when they were mounted. "We won't go far—just down the creek a ways. There's some big old trees you ain't seen, an' a bunch o' cranes' nests by the deep spring holes. We'll have a look at them, an' then just kind o' loaf round."

There was no racing nor talk of racing this time. They jogged onward easily, side by side, going nowhere in particular; and for a time their speech followed this slow, aimless lead, rising to no heights and sounding no depths, but merely skimming lightly over calm, unemotional levels. Had there been a chaperon she must have dozed in her saddle in sheer ennui. A half-hour passed before Steve remarked, in a matter-of-fact drawl:

"They tell me you're talkin' of quit-
tin' us."

She nodded, smiling. "Yes, I must go next week, I think. I've been here a lot longer than I expected."

He was playing with his bridle rein, looping it back and forth around the

horn of his saddle, keeping his eyes carelessly fixed upon what he was doing. "I'm sure goin' to miss you a heap," he said after a time.

"I hope so," she returned lightly. "I hope you will—for a little while, anyway; but then there'll be plenty of things to help you forget."

"Forget!" There was the least perceptible stir in his voice; but he dropped back into a grave sort of levity. "Why, yes. I expect I'm goin' to lay awake nights, most o' the winter, forgettin' you. Am I goin' to write to you? Here's a good place; let's get off a minute."

A giant cottonwood grew at the side of the path, its lower limbs, huge and hoary, drooping as with the stoop of age, almost touching the ground. He helped the girl to a seat upon one of these, where the sunlight fell genially upon her, standing by while she settled herself to a comfortable posture.

"What a splendid tree!" she said, turning her fair face upward to look at the towering mass. But his glance did not follow hers; it was intent upon herself.

"Am I goin' to write to you?" he repeated; then, suddenly but very incidentally: "Oh, that makes me think. There was a letter come for you this mornin'. Rennick gave it to me; said it come in after the pouch was locked at Lusk, and he stuck it in his pocket an' then forgot to leave it at the gate. I run across him up the trail. Where did I put it now?"

He was feeling slowly through his pockets, taking plenty of time at it. By and bye he found what he sought and gave it to her.

"You can read it if you want to," he said, "if you'll let me smoke one o' these little paper things while I'm waitin'."

"Thank you," she murmured as she glanced at the envelope. "Yes—yes; go on and smoke." And she opened the letter and began to read, while he lounged with his square shoulders against the big limb, feeling for his tobacco and preparing his cigarette with much deliberation. It was rolled

and lit, all very slowly, before he glanced at her from under the sheltering brim of his wide hat.

The sheets of the letter lay in her lap, held lightly in lax fingers. Her lips were in close control; but they were quite colorless, and the same deep pallor was upon her delicately rounded cheeks. Her eyes were gazing straight ahead, fixedly, but with the look of seeing nothing. There must have been bad news in what she had read.

But he did not appear in the least sorry or sympathetic. His cigarette fell from his fingers and he edged a slow step closer to her, while in his deep eyes there rose that blaze of inextinguishable light. He spoke very quietly, not to startle her.

"I expect when we're married I'm goin' to be right bothered for a while to know whether to call you 'Kate' or 'Elizabeth,'" he said.

Not to startle her! And of course she wasn't startled—not in the least! If lightning had riven the great tree from crown to root she could not have been more shocked, dazed, paralyzed. For five long seconds she sat like a graven image before she turned her exquisite head and gave him a look—a look that was a whole text-book on expression—a look astonished, accusing, challenging, revealing, joyful, defiant; but most of all revealing. He had seen her flush before, under provocation; but now she blushed, a furious, mad rush of deepest scarlet. Her lips moved, but not the least whisper of sound would come.

And while he had her in this utterly helpless plight, he took her—leaped with a tigerish spring to her side, put his mighty arms about her and drew her to him in a clasp that nothing could break, short of death. Wildly, furiously she struggled, being of a temper not used to easy surrender; but not a fiber of him yielded.

"No!" he exulted. "You don't get away from me till I let you go—till I get plumb through with tellin' you how I love you. Gawd, how I love you! Look at me, my heart an' soul!—look at me just once, fair, an' then if you

say so I'll let you loose." He compelled her to do as he said. In his eyes was that flame kindled at Creation, when God said, "Let there be light." Beholding, she ceased to struggle. "Gawd!" he breathed, and with that word stooped and possessed her lips with his.

"Let me go now—please!" That was her word after an hour or so; and with passionate reluctance he gave her her freedom, but hovering within easy arm's reach, instantly ready. "Just look at my hair!" she said, with a shy note of laughter in her voice.

"I'm a-lookin' at it. An' to think I'm goin' to have it to look at all my life!" He offered to lay his hand upon the warm, red-gold mass; but she drew away with a pretty air.

"No, sir! You aren't to touch me again until I've forgiven you."

"You've got to forgive me horrible quick, then. What have I got to ask you to forgive me for?"

"For frightening me so."

"Frightenin' you?"

"Yes! By deceiving me so."

"Oh! Deceivin' you! Who begun the deceivin' business, Miss Kate Buckley?"

Her pout passed easily into a smile, and the smile into a rippling laugh. "But *you* weren't deceived. Tell me, now; how did you know?"

"Shucks!" he deprecated. "That wasn't anything. You forgot you'd been writin' to Molly before, a year or two; an' there was your handwritin' on that first letter. I suspicioned I'd seen it before. An' then that first letter had some words out of a piece of poetry—do you remember? 'Far voices out of darkness callin'.' An' that first day up on the hills you said some more of it—about 'a wind from unsunned spaces blown.' I expect you overlooked that; or else you didn't expect me to know it. But I did. Old Man Whittier wrote it, didn't he? I can say it over for you. Poetry's my long suit—good poetry; I got my trunk tray plumb full. But that was what

cinched the thing with me—your sayin' over that line up on the hill."

"Well, but—" She was not yet wholly forgiving. "Why did you keep it up—your deception—after you knew it was getting serious?"

He tried to appear remorseful. "That wasn't the right thing, was it?—after you had quit tryin' to deceive me." He smiled as he looked down at the scattered sheets of the letter. "How would I ever have managed to tell you I loved you except for that? I couldn't. I don't look like such an awful shy man, do I? But you'd have been sorry for me clear through if you'd seen the way my fool heart got the trembles every time I'd look at you. You wouldn't show me how you felt; I expect that's the woman of it; so I just figured I'd write her to you an' then be around when she came, where I could look at you an' see. An' when I saw—you thinkin' I thought it was another woman——"

There was a long pause. Then, "What did you think of me—for answering that advertisement of yours? You couldn't have known how much Molly had been talking about you in her letters, until I was— What did you think of me?"

"Shockin'!" he mocked.

"It wasn't a bit ladylike."

He had contrived to get her fingers into his clasp, and was drawing them softly back and forth across his cheek and over his lips.

"No," he agreed gravely. "I expect you've got a lot o' things to learn before you amount to a real lady!" A sudden fit of chuckling seized him.

"An' that wasn't all the reason why I kep' on with it," he told her. "There was another reason, too. That man Billy—you've noticed him around the ranch—he was the most fun. I had him fooled right from the jump. I showed him this letter, before I mailed her. You'd oughter heard him! He fair hollered the top of his voice off at me. He'll want to quit the country when he knows."

By and bye, as the shadows stole softly down upon them, he glanced about.

"Where's the hawsses?" he said. "They've strayed back home. It'll be a rank give-away on us. We better be trailin' along, if we've got to foot it back."

He put out his arms to help her to the ground; then held her against his broad breast as he would have held a little child, letting her feel the elastic strength of his big, young body.

"Elizabeth!" he whispered. "Kate! Kate-Elizabeth! Heart an' soul of me!"



MOTES AND BEAMS

HIS wife declares he'll never fail
 Within her orb the mote to spy;
 But just as quick he is to hail
 The beam within a maid's bright eye!

ROBERT ELLIOT.



MANY a young man loves an heiress for himself alone.

GOLDENROD

A HAZE came in the autumn skies,
 The sere fields grayed beneath the sun,
 And hushed were all her woodland cries—
 For summer's reign was done.

But from her courtyard byways gleamed
 The stately plumes of goldenrod,
 To mark where once proud summer dreamed,
 And once her feet had trod.

But now it lies, the scattered crown
 That she in sorrow left behind,
 When, outcast, old, she wandered down
 Mad paths that Deathward wind!

ARTHUR STRINGER.



AT ONCE

"I HAVE here," said the great man, "my autobiography, which I desire you to publish after my death."

"I hope," said the great publisher, "that it is nothing you are proud of. Business, you know, is still business, and we must always consider our public."

"Nothing, I assure you!" said the great man. "Indeed, I am secretly ashamed of it."

"Good!" exclaimed the publisher. "It is, I infer, full of trivial and wholly inconsequential details."

"Ah, yes."

"And, doubtless, relates a lot of gossip, with anecdotes of others, so arranged that they can be clipped out by exchange editors and published with credit to us."

"That has been my aim."

"Your picture, of course, every year, from the cradle to date, will be interspersed throughout the book; also pictures of your pet cat, dog, chickens, if you keep them, and other animals, together with a lot of family groups."

"Yes, I have arranged for that."

"Then, there is but one thing more. Have you been indiscreet?"

"Oh, very; that is my strong point."

The great publisher rose to his feet enthusiastically.

"My dear sir," he exclaimed, "don't wait, don't wait, I beg of you, until after you are dead. Publish this book at once and get the benefit of all the royalties and added fame that will surely be yours."

THE LONG WHITE BRIDGE

By Laura Campbell

THE beginning of the end was destined to occur on that very night in which Chandler, openly and without shame to his manhood, made first confession of his great fear.

They had been talking over their pipes—or, to be more exact (since Chandler had long been whimsically noted for his peculiar antipathy to the weed), over the pipes of Riley and Dr. Hewison—in the latter's study for two hours or more before the subject that opened the gates, as it were, was introduced.

The doctor, in looking for some curious trifle that he wished to show his friends, had chanced to open a certain drawer of his desk, and had displayed thereby, for the one fleeting minute, a disorderly pile of closely written and apparently miscellaneous sheets; Chandler, nodding toward them on the glimpse, half jokingly asked if the material problems of the phial and the pill-box were to be discarded for the more subtle and esthetic mysteries of the literary pen.

"I don't know—yet; it may take that form, or perhaps—and more likely—merely a monograph or treatise on the subject. That drawer, Chandler, contains about five hundred and one different varieties of human fears that I personally have collected."

"Heavens!" Riley put up his hands and shrank in mock horror away from the desk; "and you expose us thus! Most awfully inconsiderate of you, Hewison, and—quite unprofessional, to say the least."

The doctor, lightly placing the tips of his long fingers together, regarded

him seriously, and, for a moment, in silence. Then he said:

"For some of those that are so unfortunate as to be victims it is, however, pretty much of a hell on earth."

"It is queer, come to think." Riley puffed meditatively at his pipe. "There was a man at college who was afraid of—sounds outrageous, but it's exceedingly true—he was afraid of green eyes! Introduced Southington to him one evening. You remember Southington—and his eyes. Well, my friend with the fear gave him one look and then backed away as though he were the Evil One incarnate. Southington is as sensitive as a 'steen-year-old girl, and the more valiantly he strove to be friendly and agreeable the more palpable became the other one's fear of him. Oh, it was huge, *but* creepy."

Dr. Hewison smiled. "Your friend's far wild-man ancestor had his out-of-town residence evidently near the lair of a man-eating tiger or other blood-lustful beast."

"Oh, you believe that that theory explains such things?"

"Well, possibly; most of them." The doctor hesitated. "You can see it most plainly in children—that is, some children. They are, in turn, passing through the same throes of living, in a milder and time-attenuated form, of course, that the race itself experienced. When you see the mighty hold that some fear has upon a little child, you can easily imagine the almost perpetual shaking-and-quaking-in-terror that reigned in the days when the chiefest treasure man had to guard was his own life, and manhood itself was measured

by the ease and agility with which one could manage on all-fours when the need arose."

"But"—Riley bent forward, deeply interested—"when such a child does not manage to outgrow or out-evolutionize the fear, but grows more deeply back into it, as it were, so that when he is a man it becomes a beastly nuisance, as with my friend, you know——"

"Nature shows some strange side-tracks of development," the doctor said.

"But, when she deposits the whole burden on the shoulders of one puny man—and a good fellow, too—rather indiscriminating of the old lady, don't you think?"

Dr. Hewison drummed impatiently on the broad arm of his office chair. "It would be quite impracticable to explain all fears by means of the same theory," he said; "some of them——"

"—perhaps are instances of punishment deferred—I mean transferred—'unto the third and fourth generation'—do let theology through the door, doctor."

The doctor frowned slightly and then, as though to avert a possible catastrophe in the conversation, asked suddenly: "Did your friend ever try to—er—cure himself of his disease?"

"Disease! Oh, the eyes! Well, rather delicate to inquire, you know. We hadn't yet traveled the last milestone in intimacy. You think they can be cured, then?"

"I have known cures—a few. Generally, though, the patient, if I may so call him, upon his return to the normal, only steps into another—well—doom."

"Not another fear?"

"Oh, no; the cure that way will be complete. But there are—after-effects; it seems as though some sacrifice were required. Sometimes there is mental or moral deterioration; but this, you understand, only in those intensely peculiar cases that are, to science, so carkingly fathomless."

"But why take the chance—at that price?"

"Ah, that's just it—chance; there is a chance, you see. Figuratively, it's merely a problem for the table and the knife."

"And the cure is accomplished by means of——?"

"A sort of shock to the whole system. If it is ever possible that in some way, either by accident or purpose, it might be brought home to the patient that his fear is utterly without reason—if he could come face to face with it, as it were, with all his senses alert and balanced; if it might be proved to him——"

"What a blathering idiot he has been! Ah, I see, I see; there must be a shock, indeed!"

"Riley, you are quite too heathenly healthy. You must at some time have heard, however—and this will be a mild explanation for you—of that sort of experience in which a person coming into a partially darkened room or waking in the night, perhaps, thinks that he discerns a shape or figure before him standing in some natural—and yet unnatural—attitude by the window, maybe, or the door, or sitting in a chair. Such an appearance is usually caused by some odd inter-arrangement of furniture or clothing in the room. But if the deception is so cunning as to grip the beholder with as strong and as startling fear as though the thing were a grim reality, and at the same time be not convincing enough to dispel all doubt, he will, even with the terror in full possession of his soul, be very likely seized with a strong desire to go up, put out his hands boldly, touch and feel—quite regardless of any evil consequence that might ensue. With the senses convinced, in such a case, the fear has culminated and the person laughs at his folly. But in attaining the end a certain small shock was experienced. In the instances of the more peculiar fears, it is so great sometimes as to be permanently disastrous."

Riley, in silence, watched the smoke as it eddied up in circles from his pipe. The doctor continued:

"One of the extreme drawbacks, for

the profession, in effecting a cure or in learning more about the several states and stages, is the stupid reticence of the victims themselves in regard to it, especially that of the really interesting cases. The less important ones, indeed, are often quite the opposite—much too garrulous and given to attitudinizing as though they took a special pride in their affliction.”

“And for the others—one never really knows then when he may be consorting, perhaps intimately, with just such a victim,” Riley laughed. “Danger of contagion, too; who knows? Oh, the mysterious deeps of each separate human mind! Come, doctor, confess!”

“Really, I’m sorry—rather; but I have none. Not that I am by nature remarkably courageous, you know, but I’m absolutely ordinary.”

“So am I. I’m not afraid of anything in the universe. I’ve too sensible a digestion, I fancy. Sorry for your sake, Hewison. But what about Chandler here?” He turned suddenly. “This leaden silence is surely a portent of an interesting case. Oh, dreamer of pipeless dreams—come, out with it!” He grinned delightedly, like a tormenting schoolboy.

They were accustomed to Chandler’s silences, as they were likewise delectably familiar with the moods of buoyant and brilliant wit which, seizing upon him occasionally, held the other two spellbound for hours at a time. Tonight he had seemed to be so deeply preoccupied with his own thoughts, as he sat quite solitary in the shadow of the chimney-corner, and had taken so very small a part in the conversation, that they had not supposed him to be interested or even listening at all. But, at Riley’s crude and good-natured challenge, he leaned forward unexpectedly, and peered at them for a moment, queerly and half smiling, through the haze of smoke. Then he brought it out, bluntly.

“I am afraid of this,” he said, “because it reminds me of that.”

“This?” queried Riley, mystified. “Ah, Hewison, what did I tell you?”

“That?” The doctor wrinkled his brows in perplexity.

“I am afraid of the great white darkness. It sounds, I am aware, most blatantly ridiculous—but if I should ever be caught alone, outdoors, by a fog, I believe I should go mad.”

“A fog!” Riley’s voice was comically thin with a large incredulity.

“Oh!” The doctor, stooping to the andirons and sighing at the sacrifice, pretended to knock the ashes from his meerschaum.

“Behold me in all my weakness,” Chandler laughed.

“Tell us the story, Chandler.”

“There’s the pity of it—there isn’t any. It just is, merely exists, you know, for no apparent use in all the world, and without a cause in the beginning.”

“Ah, then there *was* a beginning—within memory?” Dr. Hewison bent forward curiously.

“I suppose—yes—it might be called so. I was a mere child.” He drew his chair into the circle of ruddy firelight. “We were coming home one night, my father and I, from a visit to my aunt, who lived three stations above us. I had fallen asleep on the train, and my father, unwilling to wake me—probably through fear of the strenuous rebellion I was like to make—was carrying me the short distance between the railroad station and the house. There were no street lamps in the little village where we lived then, and the road was very dark. It was, on this particular night, still darker—if I may so describe it—because of the dense white fog that had fallen with the twilight. Well, on the way I awoke, and in that moment my small soul was face to face with its first real terror.” He paused, passing his hand across his eyes with a quick, strange gesture. “God, what a thing for a little, little child!” The doctor, listening keenly, barely caught the half-gasping murmur. “There was a bridge, but of course you understand that for my father there was none—a bridge, and yet we were on—at least *he* was on—the old elm-lined road that in daylight or in the ordinary clear dark

of night was as familiar to me as the touch of my own small hand—a long white bridge it was, with rails that stretched mysteriously and never-endingly into the fog. I had a horrid sense of being in some place quite alien to the world, and I felt that, should we ever reach the end of the bridge, some fate indescribable would be awaiting me. I shrieked aloud, holding tight to my father's neck—shrieked in vain my terror of the fog—the white dark, I called it—and begged him to turn back lest we reach the end of that ghastly bridge. He thought, of course, that it was some childish dream, and strode but the faster, striving to quiet me and even threatening a sound thrashing if I did not instantly cease my cries. And then the terror—it is, it must be, to others quite incomprehensible—crowded upon me. I struggled, slipped from my father's arms, ran blindly back for a few steps, and fainted."

Chandler's listeners could see that his forehead was glistening in the firelight. The doctor, leaning forward to stir up the dull-burning coals, let his hand rest, as though by accident, on the hand of his friend as it lay on the arm of his chair. It was clammy cold.

"And the memory of that is what makes you fear—?"

"Oh, no! the memory would be a very small burden to carry. But at intervals, through the years, whenever I have been caught unaware by a deep fog, it has recurred—always the same—with the horror of the end of the bridge and the feeling of not-here-ness, as it were, strong upon me; and the terror is never diminished—never"—he smiled grimly—"loses any of its flavor through familiarity and a longer acquaintance. I have never, curiously enough, been caught while alone. It has been at times most embarrassing, to say the least. Once I was with Ed Gillette on the Rumsey Road. He thought I was mad, and has always looked at me a trifle suspiciously ever since. No, I did not explain—what would have been the use?"

"It certainly is—beg pardon, Chandler—rather stiff, you know," said Riley.

Chandler, smiling steadily, looked across at him. "What is the use?" he repeated.

But the doctor was tapping his fingers together impatiently. "Did you ever make any very strong effort to—not to turn back?" he asked; "to go on, in short, to the end and discover for yourself what a—a—?"

"'Blathering idiot' I had been? Yes, once; but it was too awful. It is very easy to turn back, and I am only human," Chandler answered. "As I turn I always go off, you know, and in that is a great relief."

"You ought to go on to the end." The doctor's hands clasped in a sudden decision. "This thing, kept up for very long, you understand"—he squinted his eyes professionally—"for a very little longer, perhaps, will ruin you."

"When I get rich"—Chandler, rising and stretching his arms up languidly, laughed—"when I get rich, I shall clear out and go to a country where the sun is always shining, and the sky is ever blue." Then, briskly: "Oh Riley—man, come! it's time for our 'jamas and dreams.'"

The doctor, standing on his porch, watched them as they passed slowly down the drive and out through the gate to the roadway. As he turned indoors he happened to glance toward the far horizon and noticed, absently, that a thin mist had covered the shadow of the hills. "Those fellows live too near the meadows for their bodily welfare," was his thought as he re-entered his study and drew his chair up to the desk.

The next evening he was much surprised to receive a letter from Riley, dated from his place of business in the city:

MY DEAR HEWISON: I write this in verification, as a sort of Q. E. D., you know, of the strange tale that Chandler told by your fireside last night; so that you may, if you so desire, and in all honesty, add a few pages to that pile of ghostly manuscript you had in your drawer.

You may remember that when we left you a slight fog was beginning to fall. By the time we had reached Benson's Crossway it had thickened into what Chandler calls "a dense white darkness." Well, I joked with him about it, of course, hinting—oh, delicately—that now the time was come when he might prove to me that he really was no kin to "Colonel Capadose." The proof was—ugly; vaguely, indefinitely ugly; and yet, certainly the horror of it all was definite enough; some of it was communicated even unto me as I stumbled along by his side, gripping his shoulder hard and trying to shake the awful, unearthly look from his face as he strained into the fog. I remembered, with a sudden vividness, what you had urged but a short time before—that is, his keeping on to the end of the bridge, if possible, and all that (though how on earth he could be on a bridge—and he *was* on a bridge, I could see that—and I, at the same time on Benson's Crossway right beside him—is more than I can fathom out in any way at all, sensible or human). And presently, I found myself listening to the murmur of my own voice, straining my ears to it as though it were coming from the lips of another person and from far off, repeating in a driveling, mechanical sort of whine, "Keep on, keep on, Chandler! For God's sake, please keep on!" although I don't believe he heard or was even conscious of my presence. I could feel him, under my grasp, staggering weakly as though to drop or turn; and yet, by a great effort of will struggling on, breast forward all the while. The agony of it, doctor, was so mercilessly naked and apparent. Suddenly I felt a great wrench and heave—I tried to stop him—but he had turned, and after running a few steps, with me after him, still mouthing forth my idiotic gibbering, he fell, and the thing was over. Looking back at it now, the whole business is nothing but a huge and grotesque nightmare. . . . He couldn't get down to business today—looks pretty much worn out. I wish, Hewison, you'd drop over to the quarters—accidentally, you know—and give us a professional lift.

Yours,

RILEY.

"Sooner or later"—the doctor folded the missive and laid it carefully away in his drawer—"sooner or later comes an end, one way or the other. The question is, which way, and which really, if one only knew, is best? Chandler's such a good fellow."

The end, however, came sooner than the doctor had thought it would, and, in a measure, in a far different manner from that which he had expected or planned.

There had been a long period of several fair and unusually wonderful weeks—weeks radiant with strong sunshine and with air so clear that, if any human eye were tempted to gaze too long or too far into the clean blue depths above, the vision were like to be smartingly blinded with the visibly pulsating ether and its many million arrow-points of quivering light. But one day, as often occurs at the top-flush of such weather, the clouds, slow-gathering on the blue, massed gradually into gray—a leaden cowl that covered the heavens and draped the world with drab. The heavy rain drumming steadily for four-and-twenty hours, weakened finally into a short drizzle, which in turn began to whiten slowly into a dogged mist. At the end of the second day of this murky visitation Dr. Hewison, after a long siege of weary rounds, returning home in his buggy, could scarcely see his horse's mid-back for the dense, heavy and all-enveloping fog through which they were slowly driving. He looked at his man, Peters, looming large, red and comfortable on the seat beside him. "Pretty thick, eh, Peters? Could almost cut it up into slices."

"No, 'tain't cutable exactly—but you might dish it up with a spoon—if it was dishable, which 'tain't. I don't know as there's any way of gettin' rid of it."

"It *is* beastly—whoa-a, Jimmy, Jimmy, careful!" He pulled at the reins. Then he went on to himself: "Even the mortal most ordinary doesn't know what he's up against in this sort of thing. Chandler, now, has the advantage in one way, sits snug in his rooms with all the lights turned on. Fortunate—his is the sort of work that can be done at home in an armchair; fortunate, very, for him. The man who wields the pen is really a very lucky individ—"

"Careful, whoa! Ah, she knows the way blindfolded, eh, Peters? I just then would certainly have gone wrong. Good night, Peters."

A little later the doctor, opening his study door, stood on the threshold

in startled amazement. Riley, in his shirt sleeves, and with his hair ruffled wildly into a shaggy, unkempt halo about his head, was pacing the room restlessly, with a soft but savage tread.

"You've been so damn long, Hewison," he blurted out. "I guess it's all up with him. I worked for an hour. I gave him a little bit from all these," he waved with weary disgust to a disorderly array of almost empty bottles that lay, uncorked, on the doctor's desk. "Oh, you needn't—they were all safe. I read the directions—but—good Lord!"

"Softly, Riley, softly. Where is he?"

Riley nodded his head toward the doctor's bedroom door—it adjoined the study. "I'll stay here," he said, and, resuming his savage pacing, prepared to await, in as much patience as he could muster, the doctor's return. But the latter did not keep him long. He came out again rubbing his hands and with a certain gleam behind his glasses that meant, Riley knew, a large professional satisfaction.

"He's asleep, man, soundly, doggedly asleep; and all, I think, is as it should be. Tell me now, Riley."

"He went out in the fog—by himself." Riley had suddenly dropped his long length into a nearby chair. "When I came home, earlier than usual, on the four-thirty, he was gone. Knowing what I know, I thought it best to double on his tracks, if possible, and make the perfect triangle—I knew he'd started for here. So I took a short cut over the meadows, across Hadley's Bridge, and—Hewison, I could almost realize *it*—there were the white rails on either side stretching weirdly into the fog (awful rotten they are—need paint); I began to wonder if there ever would come an end; the bridge *is* rather long; and I—I was a bit cut up—"

The doctor nodded eagerly.

"Well, it did come to an end, as all natural bridges do, and—I found him there."

"Beyond the rails?"

"Yes, on the roadway, just a bit beyond, and stretched out stiff, like a ninepin. Hewison, do you think—you look so uncommonly triumphant—do you think—?"

"Yes, exactly. I am sure so. It must have been horrible, though, for him, terrifying quite beyond our normal comprehension. Chandler is a remarkably plucky fellow. You see, I believe the real bridge helped him accomplish, literally, the end, as it were. The dream-bridge, the hallucination, became confused in his consciousness, as he struggled, with the real one. The white rails ended, as you say, naturally; and the end was not particularly terrifying, being merely the hard, natural ground of a natural man-built road. Now, he can 'put forth his hand in the dark' and be unafraid."

"He will be—all right?"

"The shock, I find, has been comparatively small. With his constitution he will recover quickly. It remains only for him to awake to a relieved, logical realization."

When, next morning, the doctor came down early to inquire for his patient, he was met by Riley just outside the study door. "Has he waked?" he asked him eagerly.

"Oh, yes, an hour ago."

"And he's—?"

"In fine trim, but"—Riley paused diffidently—"he's queer."

"Queer?"

"Oh—different."

The doctor opened his bedroom door, with Riley following close at his heels. Chandler, from the bed, looked toward them quietly.

"Well, Chandler?" The doctor drew up a chair to the bedside.

"You know? I reached the end of the bridge last night."

"So it's over?"

"Yes—Lord! what a fool I was! It was that accursed bridge with those never-ending white rails; but they ended—oh, they very much ended—doctor, look at me! Can't you see? I am blind!"

"Chandler, don't be such a—such

a—" But Riley faltered. The eyes from the pillow, unsmiling and horribly calm over the pitifully twisting mouth, had turned uncertainly toward him, and were gazing with an uncanny fixedness straight into his own.

"It was the fog—straining into it."

"But—man alive——"

"And it is different from all other

blindnesses." Chandler, groping for the physician's hands, caught them in the hard, nervous grip of utter despair. "I am not mad, I am not mad"—the voice in the overpowering effort to control itself began to quaver thinly, like a frightened child—"oh, Hewison, doctor, it—it is the great white darkness that I am destined to live in!"



BOBBY JONKS IN THE COUNTRY

THE country is a very wide place, and is infested with horses and cows, deacons, folks, rural felicity, land and water, crops and whiskers. In the country you go to bed with the chickens and get up with the lark, and put your left-hand stocking on your wrong foot and go out to list to the little flowers skipping over hill and dale, and have bad luck all day.

Horses and cows are animals and have four legs, one on each corner—but deacons are not and do not. A deacon throws his money away like having a jaw-tooth pulled, and loudly prays for mercy on his mizzable hired man who don't do anything worth mentioning but eat! eat! eat! The rest of the folks in the country are mostly farmers and raise the crops and whiskers. They are also youmerists, and set around in the shade and tell jokes out of the 1872 almanac, interspersed with sliding down the haystack without regard to where the pitchfork may be. Their crops are useful for food, but their whiskers look like they had been sawed out of a woven-wire mattress by a stuttering man with a dull skate.

Rural felicity is the art of impaling a corncob on a sharp stick and poking it down inside your collar and scratching the place on your back that is just out of reach of your fingers and has itched since the foundation of the world. If there wasn't any land I don't s'pose there would be any farmers; in that case, who, oh, who would we send to the Legislature? Most of the water in the country is in wells and ponds and onions. You just peel one—an onion, I mean, not a well; you can't very well peel a well—and see how your eyes water. Water is good to drink and to put out fires with and to get drowned in. If there was no water you couldn't be rescued from drowning to save your life. It is also useful for sailors to go to sea on, while they smoke their hornpipes and sing about yee-ho and a bottle of rum, and such as that.

This is all I know about the country.

TOM P. MORGAN.

"HE says he hasn't paid a cent for repairs to his auto."
"So a bill collector told me."

KATY DID

WHEN I was strolling through the gloam
 I glimpsed a maiden fair.
 "Oh, mistress, may I see you home?
 You need protecting care."
 She dropped her eyes in sweet demur;
 Said she, "We've never met.
 I can't allow it, gallant sir."
 But yet—but yet—but yet:

Katy did! Katy did! Katy did, did, did!
 Katy said she couldn't, but she did, did, did!

The stars were peeping 'midst the blue,
 But none save them descried.
 Just broad enough the path for two
 If closely side by side.
 My arm in half a circle lay,
 Her waist within its ken;
 Said she, "I never walk this way."
 And then—and then—and then:

Katy did! Katy did! Katy did, did, did!
 Katy said she didn't, but she did, did, did!

Her cheek with blushes wooed me oft
 As slow we onward paced.
 Her mouth was like a cherry soft,
 Inviting one to taste.
 I deftly stooped. She cried, "Alack!
 All kissing, pray, forego."
 Said she, "I must not kiss you back."
 But oh—but oh—but oh:

Katy did! Katy did! Katy did, did, did!
 Katy said she wouldn't, but she did, did, did!

EDWIN L. SABIN.



LANDMARKS

MADGE—I'll bet there are no young men at the hotel.
 DOLLY—How can you tell so soon?
 "All the hammocks are swung in such light places."

THE EDEN ROSE

By H. T. George

YOU see, Madeline and I had never before been on a long journey. It is as well, perhaps, to confess that in the beginning, so that you will understand how much we had expected of the trip and how disappointed we were when we encountered the sordid reality.

Madeline and I—we are cousins—started to California the day after school was out. Our people had been there all winter, and though mama and Aunt Katherine wanted to come back for us, papa and Uncle Harry wisely decided that two young ladies of sixteen and sixteen and a half respectively (I'm the half) ought to be able to take care of themselves—considering all the modern conveniences of travel; especially two young ladies from Madame Montague's school.

Of course we could take care of ourselves. But it was awfully exciting—getting ready and talking over getting ready with the girls. None of them had ever been so far alone. Nellie Tuthill had been to the Pacific Coast with her people, and she told about the nicest kind of men who talked to her and brought her flowers and candy and fruit, and made life interesting along the way. Madeline and I wondered what kind of a mother she had at the time; because, of course, no matter how unconventional a girl may be, she naturally would prefer to have her mother a little careful. But afterward we remembered that Nellie couldn't have been more than twelve at the time, so I suppose her mother thought it really didn't matter. And probably Nellie herself wasn't old enough to appreciate it; but thinking it over afterward she began to see all the fine points

of the situation, as Madeline's brother would say.

But Madeline and I really planned that in a week's trip we would have time to make some very interesting acquaintances. Madeline's cousin Esther met a man on a train once, who caught her when she slipped on the steps, and, of course, that made it quite proper for her to speak to him, and as he was going right along to New Orleans with her they got simply terribly acquainted before they reached their destination, and he turned out to be the wealthy scion of a very aristocratic house, and Madeline and I were bridesmaids. For Esther afterward married him. We thought it would be too awfully easy to slip on the car-steps—only Madeline said it would be just our luck to have the porter catch us before the man got there.

Not that Madeline and I are anxious to get married. Of course we shall be some time, but that isn't the chief aim of our existence as it is with Nellie Tuthill and some of the other girls at madame's. Indeed, we both agree that there's something a little prosaic about the actual act of getting married. We both think we should prefer a little more romance beforehand than most people have—even Esther. Parental obstacles, for instance. I do hope that when my white hour comes that papa and mama will interpose objections. So does Madeline, but she says it will be just our luck to have our people fall in love with the Man before we do.

I am a little long in beginning our journey, but I want you to understand how much we anticipated before I break it to you gently how little we

realized. My junior thesis is to be on that subject—Anticipation *versus* Realization.

Because there wasn't a Man on the train!

Oh, of course there were two or three old men, who smiled at us and looked after us—they and their wives—and asked us to sit with them at meals and were always worrying for fear we'd hurt our eyes reading while the train was in motion. They meant well, but they were beastly bores—which it's ungrateful of me to say. But human nature is always ungrateful. And there was one young man, but he was not only married but played cribbage with his wife till Madeline and I nearly screamed to see them stick those silly pins in.

To say that Madeline and I were disappointed is to put it mildly. Of course we had a good time, and I dare say we laughed a good deal, for one old gentleman—the beastliest of the bores—called us little sunbeams, which sounded like the name of a Sunday-school infant class, and made Madeline awfully angry. I didn't so much mind because he was a very old gentleman.

It was all such fun living in a car that way, and having your berth made up at night—Madeline had such a queenly way of saying, "Porter, I think we will retire now, please"—and going into the dining-car for your meals.

And tipping the porter was awfully exciting. We did it three times a day—Madeline's brother having duly impressed upon us the advisability of being liberal—until one of the old gentlemen advised us not to do it quite so often, and so we didn't. Besides, we were beginning to worry for fear papa and Uncle Harry hadn't sent us money enough.

But after the third day out we began to get a little tired of being the only young people on the train. And that was when we began to talk to Lilly Ann.

Her name wasn't spelled Lilly Ann really—it was Lillian. Not Lil—which is what Lil Carter's name is, because Lil's rather a tomboy and awfully

jolly; nor Lil'yan, as Lil'yan Fletcher pronounces hers—she's awfully pretty and fashionable, Lil'yan is. But Miss Armstrong's name was pronounced Lilly Ann—at least by her father and mother—and somehow it suited her.

She was awfully old, Miss Armstrong. I said thirty at least, but Madeline thought not more than twenty-nine. Of course I suppose you can't judge correctly when a person is so sick. Miss Armstrong was very ill. She and her maid had a stateroom all to themselves, but her father and mother hadn't been able to get a stateroom, so they had sections in our car, and Miss Armstrong used to come in and sit there for a change. She was so little and so white it seemed as if something caught your heart and squeezed it when you looked at her. Either Madeline or I could have carried her. She wasn't pretty—I don't think she had been pretty even when she was young, and now her eyes and the circles under them seemed to be all there was of her face—except when she smiled, and then there were her teeth. I don't mean that she looked like the funny pictures of the President—she didn't. She had a slow, tired kind of a smile, as if, all of a sudden, Madeline said, it struck her that this world was funny enough, but heaven was her home. And she had the prettiest white shirt-waists and heaps of pale gold hair that was too heavy for her. Sometimes when her head ached she wore it—her hair—in two big tails down her back, and then, sitting behind her, Madeline and I wondered whether she really was thirty, or even twenty-nine, and whether no man had ever been in love with her. You know writers differ as to whether there ever was a woman who had never known love. Of course Kipling says, "There was never a daughter of Eve," and so forth, and for the most part Kipling knows. But, somehow, you couldn't possibly connect Lilly Ann and a love affair. That made us more sorry for her than ever. To be so little and white and insignificant was bad enough—to be so ill was worse, and to have such a mother and

father was still worse. But to have left youth behind you for ever and ever, and never to have known the best of life—Madeline and I, who didn't like her at all at first and called her Lilly Ann to each other just to make fun of her, came at last to pity, and then after a long while—a day at least—to love her. Not, of course, riotously, as one loves Nellie Tuthill, for instance, but the way you do love someone much older and more unfortunate than yourself.

And Miss Armstrong—we had stopped calling her Lilly Ann—was certainly sweet to us. She asked us into her stateroom—you feel awfully sort of grand in a stateroom—all to yourself so—and the porter brought in a little table with fruit and biscuit, and we had a dear, comfy little afternoon tea, there in the middle of the great plains with the train flying along at unknown miles an hour.

Miss Armstrong didn't eat much. She lay back in a lot of cushions, and watched us, and listened to our conversation, and once in a while smiled that slow, soft smile that showed you all her beautiful teeth. She was a splendid listener, and you saw she understood you—except when you happened to touch upon tender subjects—what the French call the grand passion, you know. Then you could see that she had never felt its flame, nor known the smell of the Eden rose, for she sat quite silently and even smiled in the tenderest parts; for instance, when Madeline told her, very confidentially, and with the sweet, sad little hopeless way she has in telling it—her own love story. For Madeline has a love story, even if she is only sixteen, and it sounds very well indeed since it isn't at all necessary to state that he was only sixteen too, and really rather young for his age. And Madeline finished in the little way she has—it's awfully effective with the girls—especially the new girls. Madeline sighs and is silent for a moment and then she sighs again. And then she gives an apologetic little laugh and says: "That all sounds very silly now, doesn't

it? But perhaps you are one of the fortunate few who have never been madly, foolishly, gloriously in love."

Well, Miss Armstrong leaned over and took a biscuit. "Is it like that?" she asked cheerfully—as cheerfully as she ever said anything. "It must be very dreadful. Do you like fruit wafers?"

After that, of course, we knew it was useless to try to talk seriously to her. We didn't blame her—she had just missed the best part of life—that's all.

And then, Madeline said that night after we'd gone into the dressing-room to do our hair, no one could really wonder that Lilly Ann had missed it. She had not, as someone says—is it Kipling or Oliver Wendell Holmes?—selected her parents carefully.

I truly believe such parents would have crushed the life even out of Madeline. In the first place they were like Gibson's parents—I don't mean the authors of his being, but the parents that he draws. And not his nice, comfy old fathers and mothers either, but the stern worldly ones, with lots of black lace and jet. Mrs. Armstrong made you think of—oh, almost anything glacé and made in a big mold. And Mr. Armstrong made you think of Mrs. Armstrong's husband. And both of them together made you think of poor little crushed Lilly Ann. Not because they were like her, but because, being as they were, they couldn't help crushing her.

I don't know that I've made that especially clear. It was dead easy to see that they simply worshiped Lilly Ann. And you could see that to them she was still a child—I suppose Madeline and I seemed older to them than she did. Perhaps it was because she was so little—and then, you see, she had never been strong. They were taking her to the Coast now for her health. Yes, you could see that their lives were bound up in hers—but you could see, too, that they would never realize she was a grown woman. We understood the situation because of that little story in the back of the

French second-year book, which teaches you the reverence of the Chinese for their ancestors and the use of the irregular verbs. Only in the story the old man pretends to be young to amuse his aged parents. And poor Lilly Ann didn't do that. Her aged parents—I suppose they would glower if they heard me call them that, and in fact they weren't so very old; not much older than Lilly Ann—made her act the part. When it was bedtime they sent her to bed. If she wanted the window up they said, "It's too damp, Lilly Ann," very quietly and firmly, just as mama used to speak to me before I was old enough to reason things for myself—and put it down. If she put it down they said, "The fresh air will do you good," and wrapped an extra cape about her and put the window up. We noticed that whatever Lilly Ann thought she wanted they were sure wasn't good for her. And Miss Armstrong never resisted. Her cheeks would flush a little sometimes, and once she looked at her mother oddly, and then suddenly leaned over as if she was going to kiss her—and then she didn't. I wondered—at the time. As a matter of fact we never saw them kiss her, or her them, even when they said good night. And I guess that explains the situation, when you come to think about it.

Madeline and I couldn't understand it. We only knew that if we had been her—she, I mean—we should have gone crazy, or just, as my boy cousins would say, cut loose and spilled red paint all over town. We couldn't help thinking that half that made her sick was that they kept telling her she was sick, and she hadn't spirit enough to contradict them.

And yet, for all her lack of spirit, we liked her. She told us a lot in a soft, tired little way, as if it didn't matter much, about her school days—they seemed to have been tiresomely proper—and then her travels in Europe. They weren't especially interesting, but Madeline said that seemed to be mostly because she thought it was too

much trouble to make them so. She told us a lot about her friends, too—she had known a great many famous people—and we soon found out that the Armstrongs were a very rich and prominent family—not, of course, that she told us so. But it was such a colorless life to lead. Madeline and I—our souls panting for adventure, for romance, for love—looked at the pale little creature and wondered.

"Would life be worth living?" we asked each other—not in Miss Armstrong's presence, of course.

Suddenly it all happened in a moment. And I'll explain that as fast as I can.

One day Miss Armstrong was not so well. Her cheeks were very pink and her eyes glittered restlessly, as some writers say who wish to denote lunacy and others who wish to describe feverish cases. She came into our car for a little while, and we had never heard her laugh so much or so almost loudly, or talk so fast. And she was really almost pretty. But Madeline said the ravages of the disease always showed themselves that way.

I remembered afterward—that sounds sort of curdly and gruesome, as people always remember things after a murder—but I really did remember, and so did Madeline, that she spent a lot of time studying the time-tables—though she had said only the day before that time-tables were an institution calculated to furnish nerve sanatoriums their victims.

We heard her ask her father how much further it was to Devil's Flat. "It's such a poetic name," she said in explanation, "I'm anxious to see it."

Mr. Armstrong told her it was the next stop but one. And then he went on, as if he were a leaf from a geography, to tell us that Devil's Flat was the centre of the Montana ranching district. Both Mr. and Mrs. A—were always dealing out columns of information about things nobody wanted to know.

Pretty soon Miss Armstrong went back to her stateroom, and her father and mother composed themselves for a nap. It was a sleepy afternoon and

Madeline and I watched the flat prairies rolling by us till we were both nearly in the arms of Orpheus—Morpheus—ourselves.

But just then Lilly Ann's maid came in very softly—so softly we almost screamed and did jump when she touched our shoulders, and said Lilly Ann—Miss Armstrong—would like to see us.

We went into her stateroom. Miss Armstrong was sitting up very straight in her corner with the pillows. Somehow she didn't look so old nor so tired. But she looked very, very little and childish, with her hair in a great thick coil on the back of her neck, and a crimson rose stuck between the coils. She loved red roses and must have spent a fortune on those she brought with her. The porter kept them in a refrigerator for her, and every day there was a fresh bunch of them on her window-sill. It struck Madeline and me as very pathetic somehow—as if she clung to them so because she had missed the red, red rose of love. Today there was the rose in her hair and one in her belt, and she had on her very prettiest shirt-waist.

"How pretty you look, Miss Armstrong!" we both cried when we saw her, and she blushed all over and smiled, just as our grandma does when we tell her how sweet she is. I think one should always be generous in these little praises to those who have left the beauty of youth behind them forever.

She looked at us in an odd little way for a moment, and then she said, in a strange little breathless voice: "Girls, I want you two to do me a very great favor—will you?"

Of course we said we would. We were dreadfully excited.

Then she said to Madeline: "I'm going to ask you to do the hardest part—because—well, just because. I want you to go back into the car and—well, be near my father and mother. I think mother will sleep the rest of the afternoon, but father is apt to wake up when the train stops. And if he does you must talk to him. Keep him talking. Ask him—ask him if he was

always as rich as he is now. That will start him." She laughed a little as if she was sorry that she laughed. "He likes to tell how he made his money—he doesn't see how he sold all the rest of life for it! He is proud that he has been so hard, hard, hard!" She caught her breath as if something hurt her, and then she went on steadily; "Just keep him interested—that's all, and also mother if she wakes up. And don't, *don't* let them come back here! Oh!"—she laughed excitedly again—"let them pass only over your dead body! Do you understand?"

Away down in front of us we heard the train whistle shrilly. These little prairie towns always jump at you out of nothingness—back in the sleeper we never saw them till we were leaving them. So we knew we were coming to one, and it was Devil's Flat. Miss Armstrong jumped up suddenly and gripped Madeline's wrist. "There! hurry!" she cried. "Oh, hurry! And if ever you were a dear, fascinating little chatterbox, be one now! Be one now!"

It must have hurt Madeline's feelings to be called a chatterbox, but I suppose the "fascinating" helped some. And anyway, I think she felt a little perky at being chosen for such an important part. If only she had known the part reserved for me in that day's exciting events!

Miss Armstrong's maid fairly hustled her into the aisle—I hadn't noticed the maid before—she was a quiet, middle-aged person like her mistress, but I saw now that she, too, seemed to be laboring under deep excitement. You could hear her breathing fast and she puffed her cheeks out when she did it.

Do you want to know what I really thought—if I had time to think anything in the whirl of events? I thought Miss Armstrong had gone suddenly insane and was going to commit suicide. Only I couldn't see why she chose to do it at Devil's Flat, unless, to her distorted fancy, there was a gruesome fitness about the name. It seems absurd now to think that I thought that then, but I did, and I had a swift idea

of running past the maid and calling her people—sleeping so unconsciously with their mouths a little open, in the car ahead.

Before I could formulate my ideas, however—as the rhetoric says—the train gave a great lurch and a long shudder and all the machinery creaked and groaned and stood still. Miss Armstrong had picked up the bunch of roses crazily, but all of a sudden she turned so white the maid jumped to catch her. She didn't faint, but she handed me the roses and laughed chokily, saying: "Wave them, Katherine—out of the window, here—oh, keep on waving them!"

Well, you know how you humor insane people. I waved those roses like mad—half the petals fell away from them. The front end of the train was up at the platform, and I couldn't see how people were regarding my absurd demonstration. That's what Madeline says it must have been; but Madeline is still a little jealous. For myself I shall be proud the longest day I live that it was I who waved those roses.

We could hear people talking away up at the platform—not many of them, for it was a tiny little town, and no one much is ever stirring at these towns. And all at once someone began to whistle the "Blue Danube" waltz—so softly and clearly—and two men came right under our window. I heard Miss Armstrong give a queer little gasp, and then she straightened up suddenly and began to hum the tune as if, all at once, she was ready to die of happiness. I think it all came to me then, in a flash of inspiration, and I suppose it went to my head a little—the glorious romance of it—more glorious than Madeline and I had ever dreamed of—because I just kept on waving those red roses furiously. The two men were in the stateroom behind me, and the door was shut and the biggest of them was holding Lilly Ann in his arms before I heard her say, choking with laughter and tears together—real, happy laughter and real, happy girl-tears—"Oh, make the child stop! Katherine dear—he's here!"

In all Madeline's stories, however effective she may make them, she'll never put as long a love story in two words as Miss Armstrong did when she said, "He's here!" Somehow you knew that there was never going to be any more trouble or tears in all the world, and that she would never smile that tired smile again. She would never want heaven to be her home unless she could say there too, "He's here!"

And he—well, I dream of him nights. I suppose it's dreadfully improper—but you see I might as well confess to you now what I never have to Madeline—that to him I was just a little girl that he had to notice because Lilly Ann told him to. Indeed, I'm not sure he saw me at all any of the time, though he smiled at me in the perfectly divine way some great big men have. Did you ever notice?

If Miss Armstrong had not grown all of a sudden so young and pretty I should join with Madeline in declaring that it was the irony of fate for a little old maid to have won such a man as that. But Madeline is still just a little bitter with Miss Armstrong for sending her out of it all as she did.

He was so young himself—or perhaps he was just the kind of man who is always young. And his hair was the kinky kind that makes you think of nice, good little children, and his eyes were divinely dark and set slantwise, like a Christy man's. And his chin was square, like a Gibson's. Madeline says she can just close her eyes and see him when I tell her about him.

The man with him was nice-looking, too, but not in the same way. I can't stop to describe him, except that he wore corduroy trousers and boots with high heels, like Miss Armstrong's man—but instead of Miss Armstrong's man's blue flannel shirt he had one of these high vest things that ministers wear. His eyes twinkled just like the other man's—in fact, they reminded me altogether of two big boys out for some fun.

Except that when the other man—our man—looked at Miss Armstrong

his eyes grew black and didn't twinkle, and he just held her close to him and said over and over: "Lilsie! Lilsie girl! Have you been *so* ill?"

And right away you knew, if you were a discerning person like the very much forgotten girl in the corner, that he had found just the name in all the world for her. Lilsie!

But Miss Armstrong only laughed and said: "I'm sorry, Tommy! But I shall never be sick again in all my life—our lives! A cowboy's wife never is sick, is she?"

This all sounds as if it took a very long time; but as a matter of fact, just as I turned from the window and the train started on—started *on*, mind you—the man in the minister's waistcoat said: "Now, if you'll be good enough to introduce me to the lady, Tom, we'll get to work." He said it just as if he were a dentist preparing to pull a tooth.

And Tom said: "Oh, by Jove, I forgot you! Lilsie, this is Jim, you know—red-handed James of the Sagebrush, and likewise a sky-pilot with a diploma. Lots better than a justice of the peace, isn't it, dear?"

And so Lilsie and James shook hands. And then Lilsie flushed a little and grew pale a little and said: "Perhaps, after all, we'd better wait, dear. It—it seems so sacrilegious!"

"Sacrilegious? When you marry me?" he asked. And he shook that kinky head stubbornly. I do love a stubborn man! "We've put it off too often before, and this patented plan of mine has cost too much in telegrams. When you leave this train, my lady, you leave it as my wife! Besides, if you wait for the next station it would have to be a justice of the peace, for Jim has to make thirty-second connections there for a real wedding upcountry. By the way, Jim, are you sure that door is locked?"

Mr. James nodded solemnly, and then he drew two revolvers from his belt and examined the machinery. Of course, that was all nonsense, but it gave you a lovely, creepy feeling in the roots of your hair. And then, if you'll believe me, before I quite got my

breath, the maid and I were wedged in one tight little corner—it's awfully crowded in one stateroom with five people and two suit-cases—and Miss Armstrong and her man were standing in front of Mr. James, and he had a little ragged prayer-book in his hand, and all the twinkle had gone out of his eyes and he was reading the marriage service very solemnly.

I cried hard. Someway I remembered Esther's wedding, with all the flowers and the fine dresses and the laughter—and this was so different.

"I, Lillian, take thee, Thomas—" and "I, Thomas, take thee, Lillian"—with the clank and surge of the train breaking the words. Then he slipped the ring on her finger, and it was so large it would have fallen off but that she closed her hand to keep it on. And he gave a quick little gasp, then, and stooped suddenly and kissed her, right in the middle of things, before it was time. And then they knelt down—it was awfully tight work in the space they had, and he had to kneel a little behind her—and that was all.

Except that Mr. James had the maid and me sign our names in a book he had—you see she had wanted me for a witness—and after that Miss Armstrong—Mrs. Thomas remembered to introduce me. They were very sweet to me, though, as I said, I doubt whether Mr. Tom saw me. He sat beside Miss Armstrong and looked at her and looked at her. And finally he said, in a choky sort of voice—they had all been choky at intervals: "You've married a poor man, Lilsie; but, please God, he'll make you happy, and the air will make you well!"

"I'm well now, Tom," she said—and I turned my head discreetly until Mr. James sat down beside me and asked would I marry him ten years from then. "You'll be old enough, then," he said, "and I shall have entered my second childhood, like our friends here."

Of course, I think he was in fun.

Mr. Tom told him to cheese it.

"We're on our wedding journey," he said. "And it's a journey I've been

trying to take for ten years now. Something's excusable in me. And as for Lilsie—" then they looked at each other and forgot us again.

Mr. Tom suggested that they go on into the car and ask her mother's blessing. But Lilsie looked at him like a frightened child and whispered: "Oh, no, Tom! I couldn't. You see, it's the first time I ever disobeyed them—and I'm twenty-eight!"

Madeline says she knew all the time she wasn't thirty.

So they just waited. And Miss Armstrong talked to me and told me all sorts of things to tell Madeline, and told me, very sweetly and shyly, how glad she was it was I who had helped her.

"Because you know I loved him when I was just a little girl like you two," she said, "and when love looked just as big to me as it does to you."

"I like that," Mr. Tom said. "Doesn't it now?"

And Miss Armstrong—our Miss Armstrong, whom we had pitied so—just put both her hands on mine and drew me over to her and said:

"Little girl, dear little girl—love is the biggest thing in all the world. Remember that!"

And then the train whistled again—and then for a few seconds I only remember that everybody was in everybody's way, and that in some fashion Miss Arm—Lilsie—got her hat on and a long coat, and the maid got hers, and Lilsie thrust a paper into my hand and whispered: "Give it to mother! I—I love her so!"

And everybody kissed me—including Mr. James and the maid, who was wet with tears—and the train stopped, and went on, and I was alone in the state-room with the wilted red roses. And it was just twenty minutes since I had waved those roses at Devil's Flat.

I had lived a lifetime. Madeline says she had died two; because neither Mr. nor Mrs. Armstrong had waked up a bit, and there poor Madeline had to sit, every nerve on the *qui vive* to jump at the old gentleman the minute he stirred and ask him if he was always rich.

I've made this story so long now

that I can't take time to tell you how fast things happened after Mrs. Armstrong woke up half an hour later, and I handed her Lilsie's note—very quakingly. She simply screamed in Mr. A——'s sleep-deadened ear, "Lilly Ann has married him!" and then she lay back stiff in her seat and panted for breath. But Mr. A—— grasped the situation with masterly accuracy, I must say. Before Madeline and I knew what was happening—we were huddled all up in our seat behind them, hoping they wouldn't notice us, and they didn't, which hurt our feelings somewhat—he had grabbed his wife's hat and jammed it on her head all slantwise, and pulled his own down tight over his ears, and picked up one suitcase and a paper-covered novel—I suppose he was under the impression that that was another valise—and then he pulled the cord so hard you expected to see it snap. And all without saying a word. Madeline said she could tell without asking how he had made his way in the world. I dare say he would have insisted on being set off there in the middle of the plains with night gathering about them and only the far howl of a hungry wolf to shatter the silence. But as it happened we were just pulling in to a tiny little town without any name that we could discover—and Lilly Ann's father and mother hurried off, and the train swept on.

And there was nothing left of all that mad, delirious dream but two big-eyed girls—at least Madeline's eyes were like dinner-plates—sitting staring at each other—one of them with a bunch of wilted red roses in her hand.

Then the other passengers gathered round, and it was my turn to tell a story. Of course it wasn't my own story, like Madeline's, but it was true. And besides, as Madeline says, very generously—who would care whether a crown of diamonds was one's very own at first hand or not? We had had our romance. We had been, as some Latin book says, a part of all that we had seen.

And our own day is coming. We are young yet—we can wait.

BALLADES OF THE FIVE SENSES

By Zona Gale

I—BALLADE OF EYES THAT SEE

LEAVES loosened when there blow
No winds; soft leaves whose green,
Dim 'neath the darling bow
Of sunset moon is seen;
Voices at dawn; the keen
Flown smell of vines—these show
Frail meaning caught between
The bourne of yes and no.
Yet there is tender art
To fathom what they mean.
Aye, by the rose's heart!

I lift my face and go
Among them. Now I lean
Where willows fret the flow
Of water that has been
Where lilies were to glean.
And in the osiers—oh,
An ouphe, an elfin queen!
I did not see her—lo!
The osiers did not part.
Yet she was there, I ween.
Aye, by the rose's heart!

ENVOY

Spells, lay upon the screen
The things that move me so.
I seek the better part—
To see with eyes serene
What things these others know—
Aye, by the rose's heart!

II—BALLADE OF LISTENING

ON summer slopes all white
With shy desire of day,
The air, with pearl bedight,
Prepares for gold array.
The sun-drugged stars delay

THE SMART SET

To die; the winds take fright
 And question, and betray
 Frail sounds for my delight.
 O voice of ancient springs!
 O little echo-flight!
 O harp of things!

In grasses that lie bright,
 In grasses that lie gray,
 Up in the dove-pale height,
 Down where the jonquils pray
 Are printless feet astray.
 Airy the hands that smite
 The lyre in nameless lay;
 And the great gods invite
 Lore of the earth chantings
 On winged looms away.
 O harp of things!

ENVOY

Harp, is it this to say?
 "Delicate joy is sight,
 Quickening the voice that sings;
 But I am sense grown fey—
 I am the day and night."
 O harp of things!

III—BALLADE OF TOUCH

I TAKE my way through foam
 And moving moss and reed
 A-blow below. The chrome
 And green of wave and reed
 Laving the under-mead
 Yield me caress, and comb
 The fluttering light, and feed
 The odorous wind a-roam.
 Now hath the opiate stream
 Allured me to its gloam.
 Is this the door of dream?

I love the velvet loam
 New-turned to take the seed.
 The blown hair of Melpome—
 I ask no other creed.
 To lucent things give heed:
 Note how the great gold dome
 Melts, honey-soft, to lead
 The eye to moveless Rome
 Ylimnèd as to seem
 An old illumined tome.
 Is this the door of dream?

ENVOY

Words, flow like wine, and knead
Soft images for some:
As wax and curd and cream,
And bloom, and things that breed
Beauty that is our home.
Is this the door of dream?

IV—BALLADE OF FLAVORS

FRUIT tasted in the wind
Is sweetest. Grape and pear
Are spiced with wine of Ind
By secrets of the air.
Sweet things there are that share
The need of sun to find
The sweetness that they dare:
Almond and citron-rind,
Honey and quince will one
Ambrosial flavor bear
For banquets in the sun.

But when the night is kind
With stars, and one doth wear
A garland featly vined
With oak upon his hair,
The moon makes magic fare.
Oh, dark is but designed
For leavening syrups rare
And nectar spiced and wined,
Iris and cinnamon—
Savors unbidden there
For banquets in the sun.

ENVOY

Guest, be not unaware
When, haply, you have dined,
What lute and lamp have done
For flavors long confined;
But come you some sweet where
For banquets in the sun!

V—BALLADE OF OLD PERFUMES

Now out of dream old springs
Flow soft with many red
And golden fluttering things.
Sweetly from underhead
All the wan air is fed

THE SMART SET

With faint rememberings
 Of hours long buried.
 Rose-rumors steal and stir;
 They come on wind-like wings,
 The old odors that were
 Nard and mint and myrrh.

I think that as there clings
 Color to blossoms shed,
 So love and all that sings,
 So hearts that beat and bled
 Were with old fragrance wed.
 Now when the garden flings
 On many a secret thread
 Sweets to the wanderer,
 Some buried witch-bell rings
 The old odors that were
 Nard and mint and myrrh.

ENVOY

Spring, let me lay my head
 Where the wild season sings
 Some dead girl's heart from her.
 O young heart, ages dead,
 Old odors thrill mute strings—
 The old odors that were
 Nard and mint and myrrh.



THE MAIN POINT

“NOW, Bobbie, I hope you haven't been naughty and peeked into the parlor at the young man who is visiting your sister. Come, now, confess.”

“I couldn't help it, maw. I——”

“What did you see?”



THAT ISN'T A WIFE'S IDEA

HOWELL—A man is considered innocent until he is proved guilty.
 POWELL—Single man, aren't you?

THE MORDANT

By Edna Kenton

HAVILAND shook his head impatiently at the sound of the knock on his studio door. It came again, and he paused to meditate. It was imperious, assertive, and a mild curiosity rose within him and conquered annoyance. So he called, "Come in."

The door swung open and a girl swept in. Haviland mentally said "swept," though her skirt hung unevenly, and was too short in front for the dragged train it sported in the rear. The binding was frayed, and it too "swept." But the girl undoubtedly had manner.

Haviland glanced upward, from the skirt edge to the face. What intervened was after the manner of the uneven hang and the frayed binding. None of it prepared him for the girl's head and features, her pure modeling, her stormy eyes, her wonderful hair.

His critical viewing of her was cut short by her actions. She advanced to the middle of the room, dragging off her shabby black gloves, and staring about her.

"Good morning," said Haviland politely. He picked up his brushes again.

"You don't want a model, do you?" the girl asked, with interrogation that was her first touch of hesitancy.

"No, I don't," replied Haviland cheerfully.

The girl slipped out of her shabby coat and walked across to Haviland. "Is she the one you have do your modeling for you?" she inquired, pointing to the woman in the drawing.

"Yes," grinned Haviland cheerfully, "she models for me now, thanks."

"She's not as good-looking as I am," the girl asserted defiantly.

"No, she's not," assented Haviland in a perfectly friendly manner.

"Don't you want a prettier one?"

"Not for this sort of work."

"Well, you do something besides this sort of work, don't you?" There was severe judgment in her voice.

Haviland laughed. "Sometimes," he said.

"Then I'll wait till you get through tinkering at that." She sat down suddenly.

Haviland worked on. It was a minute before he spoke. "Just how," he asked courteously, "does it come that you chanced to favor me out of all—? Good Lord!"

He strode over to a cabinet sunk in the wall and brought out some brandy. "Drink this," he said curtly. The girl drank eagerly, unaccustomedly, as Haviland noted, the brandy he held to her lips. She coughed as she handed the glass back.

"I've had bad luck lately," she said. "Things went wrong and kept going. Last week I got fired from Keller's. I'd rehearsed two weeks in the Tiddle-diwinks chorus. I—didn't know what to do. One of the girls, she told me artists took girls to draw 'em—she models at the Art Institute nights while she's rehearsing, and days when the play's on. She said——"

Haviland had thrust his head out of the door and issued some quick orders. In a very few moments a negro man came in with a tray of food and some hot coffee.

"You'd better try to eat something," said Haviland gently. "Then we'll begin work."

In less than fifteen minutes the girl pushed the tray away from her. "I'm

all right now," she said. "I—was awful hungry."

Haviland eyed her fleetingly.

"There's a low-necked black dress in that room yonder that ought to fit you. Try pins if it doesn't. Better leave your hair alone."

Ten minutes later, when she came back, Haviland was made sure of what he had surmised—that her neck and shoulders were almost flawless. His eyes brightened.

"Please stand here," he said. "Stand—that's it. Just so. Talk if you want to."

He went to work. In a moment the girl spoke. "How much can you make at this?"

"I—oh, that depends——"

"My soul, no, *me!* How much can I make?"

"That depends, too," said Haviland, working briskly. "Thirty-five cents an hour, up to a dollar—I have a model I pay a lot more to."

"That girl?" She forgot her pose and half turned. Haviland nodded.

"My eye!" his new model remarked.

"I beat her all to pieces. Sure!"

"You're not a city girl?" hazarded Haviland after a pause. Something in the girl's voice, honest and big, told the fact, but was rather fetching. It suited his conception of her.

"Me? I come from Simmsville, Indiana. I hate it. I got a chance to come up with a girl that sews at a department store. She got me in the walking-skirt room, but I despised it. She sews in the white room, where they make wedding dresses and things, and wears a white dress and shoes all day. That's some fun. But I hate sewing. I can't sew. So I quit. I've done a lot of things since. She washed her hands of me when I threw up that rotten job she got for me. I've done lots of things since—I've had a change all right."

"For instance?" said Haviland encouragingly.

Her lip curled in superb contempt, and Haviland caught the lines swiftly. "Well, I got a place in a store," she said, "at the ribbon counter—it was

near holiday time, but the women were too many for me, and when a dinky little floorwalker heard me sass a big fat woman he turned me down that quick. Then I waited on table at a restaurant, but it was Sunday work too, and board a dog wouldn't eat, with a fine for every time you got caught eating left-overs. Then I sewed in a wrapper place over on Van Buren, and I'm dead sick of wrappers. Then a girl told me about Keller's, and I went over and got on. Then the stage-manager chucked me under the chin once too often, and I fired myself for a change. The Tiddlediwinks girl that told me about models said if I was so uppish about old Matthews, maybe artists wouldn't suit me—but land, what does?"

"How does it go?" asked Haviland interestedly.

"I don't know," the girl said bluntly. "That girl down at the settlement that sent me here—it was what she said about you that made me come—you see, it's this way: No man's going to handle me like a bale of hay for just fun. If it's in a day's business, that's different. And that's just where these artist fellows get ahead of me—I don't know how much is business and how much is monkeying. I got sick of it all yesterday, and I cleared out and left a fresh fellow with a face half made. He can lay on the rest from memory for all of me. And last night I went into the Northwestern settlement with a girl, and there was a yellow-haired girl there that was awful nice to me."

"I dare say they do great good," said Haviland, with a convention whose depths his hearer did not fathom. The girl retorted airily:

"Oh, I'm free to suppose they do. That yellow-haired girl done me a good turn, anyhow. She said you didn't carry on any monkeying with your models that she knew of, and talked to me about chucking the whole thing and going home—but land, when you've sniffed the city, and seen Halstead street at night—have you got any idea of how it goes through you, the lights and the hurdy-gurdy man with the

kids dancing all over the sidewalks?—even if you have just a shack of a room and no duds, you want to stay. I promised her I'd try you, and to come back to her if you didn't— Do you know her?"

"Yes," said Haviland briefly. There was that in his voice which, while it roused infinite curiosity in the girl, quelled speech. After a bit he spoke again.

"Since you haven't regular work, you can give me every morning for a while. You need not go back to her. Very well, then—that's all for today."

He was standing by his favorite window when the girl came back. "I—feel a heap better," she said awkwardly. "You tell that girl she done me an awful good turn——"

"Tell her yourself," said Haviland gently. "She's interested in her work, you know."

"That's it," said the girl shrewdly. "She ain't interested in me, see? I'm glad for what she done for me, but I ain't likely to go back soon. Yes, to-morrow, sure."

Haviland turned back as the door closed on her, and folded his arms again in the high embrasure of the window, and stared out at the cobalt lake rolling beyond him.

So Desdemona had sent him this girl—he had not asked his model's name—sent her to him as a man to be trusted. A fierce resentment, absurdly out of proportion to its cause, rose suddenly within him. If only that faith meant anything!—but it did not. It was not love which was sure of love—all this long year he had been forcing himself to own to that. It was merely sheer, crass ignorance. In spite of her brilliant university work in sociology, in spite of her doctor's thesis, on a subject upon which, only two generations back, no woman would have been permitted to write, in spite of her wide knowledge on many topics, her concepts of men and women of her own class were absurdly limited, purely of the parlor.

Haviland was slowly reaching the conclusion, after months of half-hearted fighting against it, that Desdemona would never know the full measure of love; nor know it in a half-sense even. Long ago he had fancied that he understood her limitations. Of human nature in the masses she knew much. Why any Black Dirk of Halstead street stole or killed or committed adultery, she knew the exact physiological and psychological causes which would lead to the unlawful deed. But in her scientific cataloguing she always stopped just short of her own class. It she judged by her own passionless, undeveloped self. Haviland had assured himself that gorgeous blooming lay behind the cool, folded petals that shrouded her. He believed now that those wild, hidden battles with her hidden self that he had liked to believe in, had never been fought. For a long time he had thought it all delicious play, her cap and gown, her settlements and classes and slums, her innocent wisdom of uninnocent things. Today, for the first time since she had come into his life, he sickened over the tragedy of arrested growth.

Always before, when shadowy doubt had crept upon him of his hold upon her, of her latent power for loving, he had always thought of her eyes and been comforted. Caskets of jeweled mysteries, he had called them. This afternoon he saw them stripped of mystery and merely deeply gray. Under some wild excitement, some new tenement law or Juvenile Court decision, they would no doubt still blend gray with topaz, beryl with lapis lazuli. Yet they still remained her greatest charm—her eyes, and her small, childish shoulders. He had always wanted to do her in marble and she had always refused permission. She was made for marble immortality as few women are. He had never cared to paint her. Colors did not suit his fastidious conception of her colorless face.

His odd resentment against her came back with added force, as he thought of this old grievance. She was proud

of his work, but it was pride without appreciation. She herself was the sole offspring of biological specialists, and knowing her father and mother, Haviland had always been tolerant of her temperamental lack. But there had never been any reason why she should not let him do her in marble—except that she had a serene little contempt for any sort of modelship—she could never see the compliment in it—and he had felt balked of some great piece of work therefore. She would send him other women, but she would never give him herself.

His strange resentment fed on the thought of this girl. Of late months resentment, and weariness that was worse than resentment had laid firm hold of him. Even anger rose at times, dull but heavy. He felt himself something less than a man—that he could not master this woman that he loved—master her to her own best good. But they were far apart. And she never dreamed that he was other than content. This afternoon he owned himself beaten at last. This girl that she had sent him had been the mordant to fix that confession that would not be fixed before. He was beaten.

And this girl that she had sent—that face came swiftly before him, dark, stormy-eyed, richly colored; full of the war of all the senses that this pale, jewel-eyed Desdemona lacked; no face to be put into marble ever, fit only for the palette's richest colors, a face thrilling, inspiring.

Haviland put his hot hand to his brow. His mind and heart had been disturbed of late, and his work had suffered. All his half-finished things seemed worthless, and no new creation would spring to life. This girl—this girl—all along she had made him think of something great and big and glorious; he held his breath as it came swiftly to him, not the accessories, indeed, but the Thing itself, great and big and glorious as she. Foolish thrills raced through him; he knew all the symptoms of the elusive fever. It was on him in all its strength. He dragged

a chair toward him and sank into it, reaching dimly out for cigarettes and matches. Here, with no other stimulant or light than these, was he to stay until the Thing was clear and shining before him.

II

"LURE OF THE WORLD," he called it. After two weeks he knew it was good, from the way the fever stayed with him. In this thing there was no letting up, no easing of the strain. He pressed doggedly, delightedly on toward completion. He worked morning and afternoon. If his model's pose had been a hard one she could have hardly borne the labor. As it was, she lay on her couch day after day, staring about the room until its every detail was and ever would be alive before her; but, most of all, staring at Haviland, now boldly, now furtively, according as her thoughts were. As for Haviland, he was blind to her boldest, longest stare.

Hagar Grant's brief experience with the world had not been pleasant. Her brief experience with artists had been even less so. Even at Haviland she had been wildly and senselessly scared that first morning when she had come according to appointment and had found him pacing the floor and had heard his first curt command. His eyes were like a madman's, she told herself, never having seen insanity in any form. Yet she had obeyed him, had taken up the mass of raw silk he had pointed out and had gone away to remove her clothes and to wrap herself in it, had returned, frightened still and ashamed, with every line of her splendid young figure almost nakedly defined by the clinging silk. Yet the morning's work had assured her for all time. The man was pig-iron, she told herself, after the first hour had passed, and he was still working with her, molding her this way and that, trying the pose and then coming back to her bloodlessly to lift an arm or to bend a knee.

Yet his coldness, while comforting,

was also alluring to this country girl. She found herself speculating on him, his life and the sort of man he was, beyond what she knew him to be, tireless worker and pleasant companion during rest hours. For Haviland made the long hours light; lighter than he knew. He allowed her to talk at all times. Her big, childishly gay, childishly cynical voice had a sort of inspiration in the very sound of it. It actually helped him to work. Yet much of the time she lay silent, watching him, her eyes somber and brooding or keen and full of repressed question. It was amusement enough; there had never been a day when she would not have worked an hour longer. If she had been older more might have come of these hours already; but Hagar Grant was no seducer of men, and, bold as she was in speech and manner of thought, she was furiously shy of elemental things. So, through these two weeks, she merely speculated on Haviland, his ways, his habits, his life, finding but little material on which her crude imagination might work.

About two o'clock on the fifteenth day Haviland laid down his brushes. "I dare say you're tired," he said. "We'll get luncheon over with and go back to work directly."

The girl drew herself into a sitting posture. "Gee, but it's crampy!" she said. She watched him while he set out a chafing-dish and rapidly concocted a rabbit. And as she watched him her dark eyes flamed and faded and flamed again beneath her brooding brows.

They lunched luxuriously, the girl sitting Turkwise on her couch, and Haviland beside the table where the remains of the rabbit toughened in the chafing-dish. She ate silently and Haviland watched her idly.

"Do you know, Hagar, my child," he observed at last, "considering the length of our acquaintance, I know you marvelously well? It just occurred to me."

"And me you," she said curtly. Then she laughed rather bitterly. "That's silly," she added. "No won-

der you've got to know me, with the way I've gassed; and, after all, I don't know a living thing about you—but I know *you*!"

"That's good," said Haviland, laughing. "Some day you shall—"

A knock sounded. Haviland put down his plate and went across the room toward the opening door. As he caught sight of his visitor his step quickened.

"Desdemona!" he said.

The slight woman who entered smiled faintly and sank down into a nearby chair. She looked pale and worn. Haviland spoke again with quick anxiety. "Desdemona!" he said.

She looked up at him. "I came in for some carfare," she said. "I gave away every cent I had this morning. The rest—oh, a rather awful thing happened almost within sound of the settlement this morning. A murder—the old story—two women loved one man. Poor Maria Lavoni—it will certainly be for life—that was where the money went, for the dead woman, Toni's wife—it was horrible. Never mind it, don't speak of it any more—you didn't come down to luncheon today. Whom have you here, and what are you working on? Oh!"

She looked beyond Haviland and recognized her protégée. She spoke coolly, disinterestedly—Hagar Grant, with the pride of her class, could have slain her where she stood—and then she followed Haviland over to his easel, where he was already standing.

"Do you care for it?" he asked her, an eager note in his voice, which Hagar caught, and which made her heart ache suddenly with sharp pain. The other woman glanced fleetingly.

"How odd!" she observed equably. "It seems a fairly good likeness. What do you call it?"

She glanced casually toward the frowning girl, crouching there like some great angry cat, as if to compare her with the painting, and her eye fell upon the luncheon remains. She looked quickly at Haviland, but he was disappointedly turning away.

"You don't get the idea," he said gently. "It's not a portrait—I dare say it's too much in the rough yet—" He broke off, and stood frowning at his work.

Hagar Grant looked fiercely on. She was in a furious rage with this yellow-haired girl, because she had not understood, and in some strange fashion had hurt this man when he hoped she would see, would understand. Not that Hagar herself understood, not that she had ever looked with more than passing curiosity at the painting. Whether she glanced at it or did not, it would make no difference—Haviland would not care—she could not hurt him. But this yellow-haired thing could, and had used her hated power just now.

She looked up suddenly to find two blue-green eyes fastened upon her, and under the pitiless stare she felt the red blood roll scorchingly up. She gathered up the dull silk till it swathed her throat, and in spite of herself her bold eyes fell. What did it mean, this rage, this furious confusion, this new disability to stare any woman down and out? She felt those pitiless eyes upon her still, darting into the most secret places, reading her through and through; and the hot blood still surged through her.

She looked up—after unnumbered eons—as the sound of the closing door fell on her ears. Haviland was standing beside his unfinished work, still frowning at it heavily.

"Who's that woman?" Hagar Grant asked. The question struck the silence heavily, and she shrank at the sound of it. Yet Haviland was not moved.

"Get your pose, please," he said vaguely. "That—she is Mrs. Haviland—my wife."

All afternoon silence reigned. Haviland worked doggedly, tensely, without desire or inspiration. His model lay frowning at the ceiling. She was trying to get hold of things. That Haviland was married she had never dreamed; not that it mattered, she told herself fiercely. Yet she was hurt, and over that hurt was furious, even though she told herself that her hurt was for

his hurt, his desperate wound, all because that yellow-haired thing had not understood something he wanted her to understand. When Haviland at last stopped work impatiently, and told her she was free, she walked deliberately over to the painting, and stared at it long and curiously.

She saw a woman lying on a couch as she had lain for many days, a woman with curling lips and sensuous eyes and delicious languor, staring at a bejeweled hand. There was background of course that counted. Haviland watched her listlessly. The day had gone badly for him in every way.

"Yes," she said at last, "I love 'em."

Haviland stared at her a second; then he laid his hand roughly on her arm. "Is that what you see in it—you?" he said.

She flushed at the touch as she had never flushed before, not even under the cold fire of those blue-green eyes. But she rallied bravely, and made crude answer.

"It's me all right," she said. "I love 'em. And I ain't any more used to 'em than her."

"Then it is clear," said Haviland slowly. "It's not dim and badly worked out—'Lure of the World'!"

The girl looked uncomprehending again. "I don't know about 'Lure of the World,'" she said with unconscious mendacity. "But she's me, all right."

"Give me another hour, Hagar," Haviland said. "I'm a pig to ask it—you're tired, of course—that's a good girl, Hagar—good Lord, but you're good!"

III

Six months after "Lure of the World" was finished—which was one month after it was begun—it was known of all men—all men, that is, to whom art means something more than the folly or the folderol of life. Haviland put it on exhibition with a daring disregard of a lifelong rule of his, to respect always the ripening process. This thing was different, how-

ever, from most. It had come full grown. The afternoon that he promised it finished he was divinely sure that he could never touch it again to improve it. So he had let it go from him quickly and certainly. And the harvest of fame it had reaped was great.

But of all the people who discussed it, Haviland and his wife never spoke of it between themselves. From that day she had first looked on it, Desdemona had not looked on it again. Since that day indeed she had not been in her husband's studio. In Haviland's case the silence was instinctive rather than intentional. He never talked "shop" with his wife, and she had so utterly missed the meaning of this thing that speech upon it was of all things the least adequate. Her blindness to it had been another turn of a rusty knife in an aching wound. She did not see, she had never seen, he was entirely certain that she never could see. Since that day when she sent Hagar Grant to him he had never gotten back to his old viewpoint of her. The resentment and the anger had lasted, and while they did not in any way affect his manner toward her, they had changed his idea of her mightily. Now and then, when he thought over their present life, he could see a change had come over it, not from day to day, but measured by the months. Little formalities had crept in, unusual deferences to the imagined wishes of the other, burdens of remembrances that happy love is so free from. Desdemona was busier than ever, with this thing and that and the other. She seemed happy, content at least. Haviland had never retracted his confession of failure. He was beaten. After all, the most of marriage was already jogging along. That was his entire comfort.

But if Haviland's silence was instinctive, Desdemona's was full of consciousness. If she did not speak of "Lure of the World," she thought of it constantly. From that long moment when she had stared pitilessly into Hagar Grant's dark, furious, burning face, she had been as one obsessed,

she told herself. Yet reiterated self-confession did not lessen the obsession. When had she ever cared for her husband's models, ever paid one the compliment of a second thought! She had seen numberless girls and women come and go, and had looked on them all alike as paid subordinates, women who cheapened themselves, in sadly irretrievable fashion, in selling, after such wise, their bodies. But for six months this girl Hagar had possessed her. She had now and then that to feed her thoughts upon in the sight of Hagar coming to or from the studio. For Haviland had told her that she suited him, and had been using her in other work. Therefore, even yet, the girl was in and out.

Never in her life, until that day she looked into Hagar's telltale face, had she ever felt a savagely elemental passion seize her and wring her in its grasp. She had shrunk to this day from calling it by name, that frantic, impotent anger which caught hold of her when she saw the girl, which swayed her in merely lesser intensity when she thought of her. She had seen other women in such mental turmoil, women of Halstead street or "Little Hell," and she had always analyzed it promptly, and marshaled its contradicting qualities into psychological consistencies. But such emotions, in Desdemona's creed, were distinctly of the slums and lower walks of life. Women of her own class—and there, more and more, she stopped and pondered.

One day in midwinter she was in her sitting-room alone. Early in the afternoon she heard Haviland's steps as he came down the stairs that led to his studio. She heard him pause in the hall, heard the click of umbrella heads as he selected one, and then she went slowly over to the window and watched him go down the walk.

Long after he passed from sight she stood there, her mind full of restless thoughts, her beautiful eyes darkening more and more. She was weary in mind and body, and utterly heart-sick. The memory of her morning

still hung heavy upon her, those hours she had spent in the Criminal Court-room. Poor Maria Lavoni, after six months of dreary waiting in the Cook County jail, had that day been sentenced, and was to be taken on the morrow to Joliet to begin her life atonement for a murder born of passion balked and turned in to brood upon itself. For six months Nella had lain in her grave; for two months Toni Zanetti had basked in the smiles of another wife.

Her eyes darkened and hardened. It was just six months since her dreadful questionings of life had begun. Since then she had been hurling them at the fates, and no answer had come, no more than answer came to Nella in her grave, to Maria in her prisoned tomb.

Her eyes fell at last on the deep tracks before the house, made by the expressmen two hours before, who had brought Haviland's painting back from its Eastern exhibitings. "Lure of the World," she knew it was—Haviland had said that morning over their courteous breakfasting that he was expecting it. "Lure of the World"—was that the answer to it all?

She hesitated a few moments, walked restlessly across the room, and then tried to go back to her old seat by the fire. But that thing was calling to her from above, imperiously. And so, suddenly, she drew her delicate shoulders together, and with a half-scared look in her green-blue eyes, she ran quickly from the room and up the narrow stairs. Once within the shadowy room that was Haviland's own, she turned and fiercely locked the door. She must be alone, alone, alone!

For a moment she stood with her face hidden against the door, trying to control her shaking body. But she turned at last, and went slowly up to where the painting stood, still in its crating. She drew up a chair and sat down before it, and looked curiously.

"Lure of the World!" She shivered, in the proud virginity of her spirit, at the fleshliness of the title—there was much about art that revolted her in

its suggestiveness, where naked biological facts did not. She made herself look at it all, the sensuousness of body, face and coloring, and as she looked she felt for the first time that nameless clutching at the throat which marks the first stage of hysteria. It all told her one thing only, the thing that the lower human life she knew so well was full of, that the slums reeked of. Her knowledge of its scientific side was great. The human side of it had never touched her vitally before. The wails and loud lamentings of the deserted wives and mistresses of her slums had never—she saw it now—meant anything to her, anything at all. She had taken it all, faith and unfaith, as simple fact among such creatures of the underworld.

Her mind harked back to that afternoon when she had come upon her husband and this girl. She wondered for the thousandth time how she had so instantly seemed to know, to understand. It had almost never been vulgar suspicion. She had seemed to know. In all her struggles, it had seemed either actual or impossible. Many times it had seemed the latter—then a sight of the girl would hurl her back into blackness. Even on that day that dreadful title had been painted boldly above the canvas—perhaps it had been the title itself, "Lure of the World"! But a thousand times no! It had not been that—it had been the girl's face, the flame in her eyes, the girl herself.

And it had been a scene where poor Maria Lavoni had borne her part unwillingly, poor Maria, whose bright dagger had gone to Nella's heart that same morning, six months before. For this girl Hagar was of the same wondrous type of beauty that Maria had so glorified in until the prison air and food had worked havoc with it and her; dark and glowing, heavy-browed and sullen, too, when fortune frowned. She had read Hagar by Maria instantly. And Haviland—

She had felt at first only bewilderment over him. She discovered in the twinkling of an eye that, brought

face to face with a part of his life, she had no idea what standards might rule his conduct. She had met for years the apathy of the wives of the underworld, their commonplace reasoning. Time and again she had seen the tempting of Adam and the Adamic fall. For the first time she began to dig dully for the roots of her own class, trying to find from what elemental things they drew life, on what rocks or sands their roots rested. Always when she found herself condemning Haviland utterly, she realized that she knew less than nothing of him. And then, hurled back on what she did know, she declared him impregnable. But always, whether excusing or condemning him, she revolted at the thought of that shameless girl, with her shamed face.

It was a long time she sat there, a very long time. She was not conscious of the growing cold or the gathering storm clouds. But suddenly, in the perfect stillness, she started, foolishly, without reason. She looked about her. There had been no sound to startle her, and yet she felt a presence near her. As she looked, half frightened, toward a shadowy corner, she saw it, lying on a couch, stretched full length—a girl, with tumbled hair, and great, burning eyes, watching her—for how long Desdemona did not know.

She caught at the carved arm of her chair, and steadied herself, while there swept across her white face a flash of pure fury. Was this girl always here—always—?

Hagar Grant got slowly to her feet and came across the room, straight up to Mrs. Haviland. Her eyes were furious, too. The two women looked at each other for a moment, and then looked away, both toward the painting. Hagar spoke first.

"Why don't you treat him right, then?"

"Why—don't—I—?" Desdemona's lambent eyes flamed coldly into Hagar's. Her voice was so low it was almost a whisper. Hagar laughed harshly.

"Oh, I know it's no business of mine," she said. "You'll hate me—that don't matter. But you don't treat him right—that's what does matter. You don't treat him right."

Desdemona could not call back her speaking voice. Hagar glanced at her angrily.

"I've thought all along that you didn't care," she said, "that you couldn't care; until I woke up half an hour ago, and saw you sitting here, and watched your face, and—saw—things"—Hagar hesitated sullenly—"and then I wondered if you did care—a single bit——"

"What is this to you?" Mrs. Haviland's voice was back and under superb control.

The girl turned on her furiously. "It's this to me," she flamed out, "that he's the grandest man that ever lived, and the unhappiest——"

Desdemona smiled at her. "Then comfort him," she said.

She clutched again at the arms of her chair. She would have given her life to have caught the words back as they dropped from her lips, ugly toads that they were, the first common thing she had said or thought in all her life. Even this girl laughed contemptuously.

"That's just what I thought," she said coolly, after the unbearable silence that followed her laugh, "while I lay there watching you, that you were just good and jealous of him—and me. Me! And I just want to tell you——"

"Tell me nothing," said Desdemona gently, sickened with the vulgar scene. She half rose, but the girl moved close and pressed her down with no gentle hand.

"Jealous as a cat," she said. "He'd be tickled to death if he knew it, for you have to care for a person to be jealous of him, and I never reckoned, nor him neither, that you ever cared a cent's worth for anybody. I reckon by now we two women know each other pretty well, you and me. I could have killed you that first day you came in here, and hurt him so beastly hard by not liking his picture—why couldn't you have said you did, anyway! I

reckon you saw plenty of what I felt, and guessed at a whole lot more that wasn't lyin' anywhere round. Well, I'm paying you back today. I saw a whole lot, too, over yonder, while you were looking at this thing. What do you mean, anyway—didn't you send me to him—didn't you tell me—didn't you believe it then—or don't you believe it now?"

She paused for a second, looking contemptuously down at Desdemona.

"You've never cared," she accused. "And he has—cared like hell. He wanted you to like this picture that day—he was crazy because you didn't see what he meant—good Lord! he wasn't painting *my* picture—not *me*—it was a woman—any woman that loves jewelry and good clothes and good grub, and ain't got but one way of gettin' 'em—it wasn't *me*!"

Desdemona raised her head and stared straight into the girl's angry face. Then her eyes wavered, her gaze broke, and she looked with set lips and darkening face toward the shadowy corner where the girl had lain. Her obsession would not die, even before the girl's fierce, crude defense. Hagar's brooding eyes followed her gaze, and her lip curled in that superb scorn in which Haviland had gloried the first day he sketched her. Her hand shot out again, and fell heavily on Desdemona's childish shoulder.

"Haven't you got used to models yet?" she said harshly. "Can't you *see* the sort he is—why, he's decent clear through. If he'd seen what you thought you saw—that day—he'd not stand for me round. He left in a hurry this morning, and when I was ready to go I was so dog-tired I just laid down there and went to sleep. Oh, good Lord, such a man, and such a woman!"

She stopped again, and tried twice to speak before she could go on.

"He don't believe you care a rip," she said at length. "Land, no—he never talks about you—but he don't believe you care a rip—no more did I till this afternoon. But I reckon I know the signs all right. You're jeal-

ous—jealous as a cat—and that means that you care. Now," her voice rang out, "you've got to make him believe it."

She walked over to a chair and got into her jacket, and fastened her cheap bit of dyed fur about her throat. Then she came back and stopped beside Desdemona.

"Don't you ever think I'm doin' this for you," she said angrily. "It's for him! I didn't have to do it for either of you, get down and eat dirt, but I've done it—for him. If you've got sense you know by that it's straight, but Lord, Lord, you fool! Now you show him you care, just as plain as you've shown me. And cut out the settlements—we don't like just ladies—women's the only kind that helps. And you don't give a rip for us—I don't know what you care for in it, but it's not us. But cut it all out for a while but him."

Her voice broke horribly and her face worked and twisted. Then she slammed the door heavily behind her.

Until day faded into moonlight the woman sat before the painting, staring at it while the day lasted, and when it went, still gazing at the massed lights and shadows. She was interpreting it subjectively at last, more and more so, until at last its formless light and shade became herself, grew vibrant with her petty plannings, her small ambitions.

She did not know, so lost was she, when daylight faded into dark, nor when the moonlight began to flood the room. She did not move till she heard steps upon the stairs, the same steps she had heard hours before descending, and Haviland's hand upon the door-knob.

He came in slowly, stepping cautiously, seeing the great bulk of the packing-box and painting in the shaft of clear, wintry moonlight, and the back of the high-armed chair; and then, as he came farther into the room, he saw his wife, rising slowly from her seat. It was so unexpected, so unforeseen, her presence here, that he all

but uttered his surprise. And then the sight of her face, her eyes, as she came steadily toward him, hushed his mere surprise to wordless wonder.

"She called me a fool, that girl, Hagar, a fool," she said. "She said that because I was jealous of you I cared, and she said I had to make you believe it—she said I must make you believe it—she said—I believed everything she said but this—she said you cared like hell!"

Haviland listened almost stupidly to her hurrying words, her choked utterance, her solemn voice speaking the childish sentences, for the first time in all his knowledge of her without the childish note. He did not understand, and he did not dare believe, yet his first impulse was to spare her. He put out his arms to her, where she stood in her isolation of spirit confession, and he drew her, trembling and shamed and frightened, into them. But in spite of his wonder and fear and glad-

ness, his lips smiled irrepressibly as they lay upon her cheek.

"Wise Hagar!" he said gently. "Believe that last, though you cast away all else."

"She told me twice you cared," Desdemona hurried on. "It happened to be a ring in the painting—I didn't understand until she told me. It's been cold-blooded things with me—settlements—foolish things that did no human being any good. I've thought unutterable things of you. I've been vulgar and common—common——"

Haviland drew her down beside him on his model's throne, and listened in silence to her broken words, her long outpouring. It was as if he were in the living presence of some divine birth. Her voice enthralled him—its coldness, its "white" tone forever gone. And by and bye, with all his longings and his hopeless dreams, he learned that he had never known how warm her kisses might be.



A REPRIMAND

HEAD OF THE FIRM (*to clerk*)—Have you been thinking where you would spend your vacation?

CLERK—Yes, sir.

"Well, what business have you taking up the time of the office in idle dreams?"



TANTALIZING

MADGE—I understand she obtained her divorce with the utmost secrecy.

DOLLY—Yes, dear; she was as mean as she could be. We never even found out who the co-respondent was.

PROSIT!

FILL the glasses
 To the brim!
 Old Time passes—
 What of him?
 At the portal,
 All we know,
 Man is mortal;
 Let it go!

Thus, while drinking,
 Joy shall be
 All our thinking;
 Life is free!
 Banish sorrow
 For today,
 And, tomorrow,
 Come what may!

Life is brief, and
 It is true
 Time's a thief and
 May steal you;
 Never fear him;
 Fill the cup!
 We shall hear him
 Call—"Time's up!"

FELIX CARMEN.



A BREAKDOWN

DYER—I hear Chaffer lost control of his auto the last time he was out.
 RYER—Yes; the sheriff attached it.



"HAVE you ever tried to run your motor in winter?"
 "No; the roads are altogether too hard to lie on."

OUR TRAVELING COMPANION

By Tom Masson

TO be moderately well educated requires that one shall have tipped waiters in the principal foreign countries. This is likely, however, to be a lonesome business without a traveling companion.

Upon the choice of a traveling companion much depends.

One may sometimes draw a prize—the quiet, unassuming individual who never complains, who has an unfailing sense of humor, who has a modicum of tact and is not afraid to ask intelligent questions, besides keeping his effects in order. But this individual is such a rarity that perhaps, after all, it is better to strike a decent average and travel in a group.

Among those with whom we have occasionally traveled has been the young married woman who kicks. The seat at the table is never right. Her room at the hotel is invariably one story too high. She never understands why certain things have to be done. She insists upon her own "rights." She carries about with her a fixed standard, to which she expects the government of every country she visits to conform. She interviews the captain of the ship and tells him what she thinks of his vessel. After the railroad tickets have been purchased she insists upon going another way. She is constantly remembering something that she has forgotten. If anything is proposed she is the only one who opposes it, and in this respect she is like the one juror who couldn't understand why the other eleven didn't agree with him. From the beginning to the end of the journey she fills two spheres to perfection—for she is not only a public but a private nuisance.

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Right next to her stands the information fiend—the man who knows all about it and is constantly bristling with information. He points out the errors in the guide-books with condescending generosity. He carries in his head a complete diagram of every battlefield. He is a human catalogue of every art gallery. Apparently he has spent several thousand years in reading history. He floods you with information.

"Do you know," he says, while you are eating your breakfast, "of the remarkable scene that we are to witness today?"

He never tires. He knocks at your door in the morning. He sits up with you at night. He is jealous of every guide. Your mind is his target, and he never gets tired of firing at it. When he hits a bull's-eye he rubs it all out and begins over again. In a short time you begin to hate him. You hope a glacier will cover him, that an earthquake will swallow him up, that he will fall overboard. But no such fate is his. And when after he has seen you well home and you sink down alone once more, you bury your face in your hands and wish that Europe had never been born.

The next fellow-traveler on the list is the funny man—the one whom his intimate friend and admirer describes as being "so droll, with *such* a keen sense of humor. Really, he keeps me in a roar all the time."

This individual "sees something funny in everything all the time."

He refers to an ocean sunset as "the Pittsburg of the West." A forlorn cot in Ireland recalls to him a wealth of suburban jokes. English cooking

incites his raillery. French cooking brings forth a shower of "bright" remarks. He throws *bons mots* to the spectators as you pass along, and your route is lined with facetiousness. Every train of your thought—historical, philosophical, practical—is immediately side-tracked by this inhuman clown. And if by some extraordinary piece of diplomacy or luck you succeed in getting rid of him halfway around the globe, your journey through the most dismal of earth's spots is thereafter made a source of constant delight in the satisfaction that you are not forced to laugh at anything.

Upon reflection, perhaps, after all, the best traveling companion is yourself. To be able to kick yourself quietly and unostentatiously on occasion is a joy in itself. To skip when you want to skip; to learn all about some out-of-the-way thing that can be of no possible interest to anyone else; to be able to turn down precipitately and absolutely your own bright remarks before they are uttered; to enjoy your own mistakes; and when there is anything really worth taking pleasure in, to view it alone and unprejudiced—after all, this is the best of a journey.



THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT

FATHER—Why didn't you tell me your salary wasn't large enough to support my daughter?

SON-IN-LAW—I didn't want to cause you any worry before it was necessary.



A HOUSE DIVIDED

MAY—You seldom see the Newriches together.

BESS—Oh, they don't belong to the same set.



THE RULING PASSION

WYLD—Does your wife ever walk in her sleep?

ENPEC—No, just talks.

VAN DORN'S HOME

By Elizabeth Jordan

THE slim Indian youth whom Mrs. Crosby had brought from Bombay with a characteristically vague impression that he would be a picturesque feature of her new London home, received Van Dorn with a winning smile but with startlingly little English. His notions of his duties, too, were quite as nebulous as those of the lady who had employed him. It was fully ten minutes before he grasped the fact that the gentleman desired to see his mistress, and that he further sought speech with the young lady who had accompanied Mrs. Crosby back to her native land. The interview, troubled from the start, gained in annoyance and devices as it proceeded, these attested by dignified gesticulation on the part of the Indian, and by ill-screened irritation and an overt flush on the part of the handsome, high-bred caller; but all was finally made clear, Van Dorn himself descending to the sign language and using it with the freedom and vigor the occasion seemed to demand. His reward came swiftly. There was a slow dawning of intelligence on the serene, dark countenance before him, then the light of a great illumination, followed by a scene of mutual felicitation between servant and visitor, after which the beaming Hindu left the room with the swift, glad steps of certainty.

Van Dorn sank into a chair with a sigh of relief. The whole thing was so like Mrs. Crosby, he reflected, with quiet amusement. Evidently eight years of Indian life had made her more impractical than ever, though certainly development along such lines

would have seemed impossible to one who knew her well in the old days. He recalled her tendency to misread time-tables, to misunderstand the most lucid directions, to get into the wrong trains and boats when it required almost fiendish ingenuity to go wrong at all; and he wondered for the hundredth time how she had managed to reach England.

"They probably tagged her," he decided, without disrespect, but with a simple understanding of what the journey must have been to a traveler of her well-known characteristics. He reproached himself again for having failed to meet her, and then remembered that it would have taken deep insight into the occult to connect with her at any point. Indeed, it was only by the happiest chance that he now knew her whereabouts. A common friend had met Mrs. Crosby on the street the day of her arrival in London, had secured her address with the avowed purpose of calling, and had then, fortunately but quite casually, mentioned the incident to Van Dorn, whose ward, Naomi Churchill, born in India, was making her first journey home to England under Mrs. Crosby's distinctly erratic guidance. Here they were at last, and here, therefore, thanks to this happy encounter, was Van Dorn himself.

At the thought his reviving spirits flagged suddenly. Yes, here was his ward, aged sixteen, Indian born, Indian bred, newly orphaned, subjected for months past to the meteoric variations of Mrs. Crosby's influence, and now, henceforth, wholly on his hands. At the moment the responsibility

seemed an appalling one. Van Dorn winced as it loomed coldly before him. He, forty, unmarried, unfettered, inexperienced in vagaries of the girlish temperament, a wanderer over the earth, had been brought face to face, for the first time in his untroubled existence, with a care—a very large, vital care, full of possibilities of anxiety, as he now realized.

It was fortunate in a way, he reflected gloomily, that he had had time to get used to the idea. Mrs. Crosby's generous offer to "bring the child home," after her father's death, was fully six months old. The journey had been postponed, as only that airily irresponsible lady could postpone. There had been starts, and delays, and little side excursions, and inevitable returns, and slight illnesses, and excuses, and vague letters, and cables, until Van Dorn, exasperated out of his usual courteous acquiescence, had finally announced that he himself was coming to India for his charge. Then there had been a hurried effort, a definite promise, several false starts, many unprecedented detours, but finally—as might have been hoped, granted that the original purpose was not forgotten—arrival! They were here, and, in another moment or two, if the Hindu had really grasped the fact that Van Dorn's penciled cards were to be given to them and not to the cook, they—she—would be in the room.

She! For quite naturally there was only one in Van Dorn's chaotic thoughts. Naomi was a responsibility, but she was also an interest, and, thus far, a fascinating one. What she might present at such close range he could only surmise, but her girlish letters had been charming.

He wondered what Mrs. Crosby's influence had done for her. He liked Mrs. Crosby and had liked her for years, passing over her inconsequences with the ease of the friendly indifference which had developed from a slight, a very slight, flirtation. He was vaguely grateful for her well-meaning interest in his ward since the death

of Colonel Churchill, which had left Naomi alone in the world. But he could have waited very patiently to see Mrs. Crosby, and the expectation of her coming would not have set him to pacing the floor with the mingled feelings of impatience and dread which moved him now.

It was natural that he should feel somewhat nervous, he told himself. He wanted the child to like him. He already liked her—or, at least, he liked the Naomi he had found in her letters—those infrequent but wholly friendly letters, so artless, so sincere. And he liked—he excessively liked—the face that smiled on him from the miniature Mrs. Crosby had sent him—a lovely face, with exquisite freshness and innocence in its lines and with possibilities in the dark eyes that moved him strangely. He was not in the least sentimental, nor had he a susceptible nature; but he was glad, even during these new-born doubts, that she was his ward, and he hoped for a pleasant camaraderie; nay, even more than that, for a frank and real affection in his lonely life.

She was only sixteen. She had several years of school life before her yet. Then, he had reflected, if the child was a nice girl, if they became good friends in the interval, he would find some excellent companion for her—a gentlewoman in reduced circumstances—and they three would travel. He looked forward to that with an interest surprising in one for whom this little world held few secrets. He had spent his life studying it, but this, he reflected, was all the better. He knew so well where to take her. They would travel for a year or two after Naomi left school, and then—And then? Why, if all had gone well and his ward was what he hoped, some eligible young man might figure in the further solution.

Van Dorn turned from the thought hastily, almost with irritation. The thing must come, of course, but somehow it was not, for him, one of the alluring aspects the years held. However—his brow cleared and his fine head, whose fair hair was already

touched with gray, raised itself in alert listening. She was coming! That quick, light step across the hall was not the step of Mrs. Crosby. He went to meet her as the door opened, and the next moment he stood before her holding both the hands she had impetuously extended. Even in that instant he noted her perfect ease of manner and the maturity that sat upon her so strongly for her years. Yet her greeting was girlish enough.

"I could not wait," she told him, smiling. "Mrs. Crosby has disappeared. I think she has lost herself somewhere in the new house; so I came alone."

"That was right," he said heartily. "We will organize a relief expedition later. But first let me look at you and learn to know my ward."

She smiled back at him, her really beautiful young face raised to his with frank pleasure.

"You have been so good to me," she said simply. "It has made such a difference—in the coming to England, you know. If I had not liked you it would have seemed very hard; for of course I left all—my—friends——"

Her voice dragged a little on the last words, and her face clouded, but she led the way to a broad window-seat, where she sat down and made a place for him by her side with perfect self-possession. As he followed her, Van Dorn realized how small and slight she seemed in her black gown, which, simple though it was, showed the unmistakable finish of knowing French hands. He felt at once an odd sense of having known the child for years. The last vestige of doubt, self-consciousness or restraint slipped from him as he sat down beside her.

"I know," he said quietly in answer to her words. "I know. And you are a little lonely here at first, but we must change all that. I have friends ready for you, who will like you and whom you will like. I have been feverishly cultivating all my old friends who have young daughters—so feverishly that they would have been much impressed if they had not seen through it all so

easily. But they are good-natured and they have forgiven me a lot of carelessness in the past. We will look them over soon, and you shall select any you like," he added modestly.

She kept her eyes fixed on him as he talked with a quiet intentness which took in, he knew, everything about him, yet which was, somehow, almost as impersonal as a baby's steady gaze.

"Tell me something about them," she urged.

"Well, there is Lady Graydon, who knew your father when he and I were at college. Her son was in our class, and we used to spend our vacations at Graydon Towers. He died two years ago, and left a daughter a year older than you. She is a nice girl, Cecilia Graydon. She may be your very special friend. Lady Graydon wishes us to go there for a visit next week.

"Then there are Flossie and Flicker Nesbit, the twin daughters of another old friend of ours; idiotic names, but nice girls. And there are Dorothy Bliss and Kate Eversham—she's a little older, but a good sort; and Sir Philip Merville's two daughters and Joe Lamberton's girl—he was another pal of mine at Oxford—oh, and hosts of others. They have nice mothers, too, and they will 'mother' you and 'sister' you to your heart's content—if you like that kind of thing."

"I do like it," she said slowly; "at least, I think I do. How should I know? I have never had it."

The pathos of the words rolled over Van Dorn in a quick wave, but he said nothing.

"You know," she added simply, "mama died when I was two, and after that papa and I traveled around from place to place. We never had a home, and we never stayed anywhere more than a year or two. We met a great many nice people, but of course when one doesn't really belong anywhere—that seemed the worst of all—not to have a home. I always wanted one, and I used to dream that I had one. But perhaps I never shall."

"Of course you will," Van Dorn assured her quickly. "You will have a

beautiful one—just the kind you like; and you will make it for yourself, which is the very best way. Oddly enough, I've never had one, either, since I was ten. My father and mother died then, you know, within a week, and I went to Eton and was kicked around a good deal, naturally, and spent my vacations with some of the fellows. Then when I was old enough I traveled, and—er—I've kept it up ever since," he ended a little lamely.

Her soft brown eyes never left his face.

"But you've wanted one, haven't you?—a home, I mean," she asked, curiously. "Still, I suppose a man would not care the way a girl does."

He nodded. "Oh, yes; I've wanted one," he remarked tersely, "but not merely a home alone, with a pack of servants to manage. I've wanted the real thing."

"Let's have it!" she begged impulsively. "Let us make one, all by ourselves, and live in it. Can't we?"

Van Dorn looked at her closely. Her eyes met his with the innocent wistfulness of a child's. Her lips were parted in eager appeal. The feeling that swelled in his heart was an outgush of paternal love for the daughter he had never had. He took her hand and pressed it kindly, then dropped it.

"We will try to manage it some day," he promised. "But I'm afraid you must spend two or three years in school first."

Her face fell. "Yes," she said sadly, "I was afraid so."

The little disappointed droop of her lips hurt him. Already he could not bear to refuse her anything.

"But we will have it," he repeated, "if that is what you want." He saw his dream of foreign travel fade away, but immediately another began to take its place. "We will have it, and"—this with an eager desire to bring back the missing brightness—"we will begin to plan for it now."

The brightness returned as a radiance.

"We will talk about it," she cried, "and we will write each other letters

about it; and we will plan just what it will be. Let us name it, too. Then it will seem like a real place."

He entered easily into her mood.

"Very well," he laughed. "You shall name it and you shall plan it. I will tell you how I would like my part of it, and we will advise each other."

She drew a long breath. "It's going to be such fun," she trilled, "*such* fun. We shall have to plan the place where it is to be—then the building and the grounds; and then the rooms and the furniture. I have some lovely old Indian things," she added, with sudden recollection. "I'd like one Indian room, for memories."

There was a languid step in the hall, followed by an uncertain fumbling at the knob, and the door opened. Mrs. Crosby trailed in, her eyeglass up to a near-sighted eye, her gown dragging limply behind her. She extended her hand to Van Dorn as casually as if their last parting had been twenty-four hours before instead of eight years.

"So very extraordinary, Bertie," she drawled. "Sida neglected to tell me you were here. He declares he could not find me, but that is quite absurd."

Van Dorn laughed. "I'm not so sure, Louise," he said, "recalling my own experience in trying to find you at times."

Naomi's light laugh chimed in with his. "I think she has fairy seeds," she declared, "the kind one puts in one's shoes to make one invisible."

Mrs. Crosby sighed uncomprehendingly.

"I'm sure I've not the slightest idea what you mean—either of you," she assured them; "but possibly"—with a sudden hope—"we'll all be brighter when we've tea. Doesn't Naomi look well, Bertie, and isn't her gown pretty? I selected it myself. And I've persuaded her to wear her hair as she has it, in that nice old-fashioned snood. It suits the shape of her head so well. You should have seen the perfectly absurd little braids the poor child wore in Bombay. The moment

my eye beheld them I realized that I had a mission."

She sighed again over the recollection, and rang the bell a second time, succeeding in luring Sida into the room and confiding to him, in a mixture of English and Hindustanee, the recital of her immediate needs.

During this brief interval Van Dorn and his ward seized the opportunity for closer mutual study of each other's appearance. He noted in detail the child's exquisite, high-bred features, the short upper lip of her lovely mouth, the curl of her long brown lashes—even the black velvet band which so alluringly caught up her wavy, golden brown hair. She was burned by wind and sun, but the climate of India had wrought no harm, for she seemed radiantly well. The brown of her eyes, the soft brown of her skin, the golden brown of her hair, and the brilliant flash of her little white teeth, all held a charm great for him. She was all right. She was everything he had hoped; in fancy he detected some flavor of the sensation his ward would make several years hence.

In him she found a handsome, dignified man of forty—very old indeed, from her girlish point of view—dressed with the quiet perfection of an English gentleman and radiating the immaculate neatness of his race. His close-clipped hair was crisp and fair, his eyes were wide open, clear gray, sheltered by eyeglasses, and his smooth-shaven, handsome face was more deeply tanned than her own. Two personal peculiarities of his she had noticed as they shook hands. One lock of his hair, on the left side above the ear, was snow-white, and on his cheek, just below it, showed a small white scar.

When Sida returned with the tea Mrs. Crosby gave herself up to apparently aimless ministrations, and eventually handed Van Dorn a cup of the familiar, almost colorless beverage he recalled having received at her hands in earlier days. As she drank her own and ate a muffin with a healthy English appetite, her manner changed and for the first time she seemed really con-

scious of the presence of her friends. She turned upon them both a buttered smile.

"Really, do you know, I've been dreading this horribly," she drawled; "getting home, I mean. But if there are still tea and muffins it can't be all grim horror, can it? It seemed to me on the boat that I had undertaken too much. The men all had livers, and exercised every day; and the women did crochet work. I counted seventeen little white worsted shawls they were making—to introduce into their homes. And I seemed to see them—these shawls—don't you know, as domestic high-lights all over England. Then some were seasick—some women, I mean, and some were in love. They were the worst—the lovelorn men and women. They sat in deck-chairs near our stateroom windows, and told each other about the very moment when they first realized all it meant. Naomi here drank it in. I wish you might have seen her."

The girl flushed crimson.

"I tried not to listen," she said, "but they would talk."

Mrs. Crosby absently buttered another muffin.

"They always will," she murmured; "that is one of life's supremest trials. And, speaking of trials, dear Bertie," she added, turning to Van Dorn, "do you know I've a notion we are in the wrong house? The servants act so queer, and they did not expect us, they said; and I lost some of my lists, and quite possibly this house is the one I intended to take and did not. And now a very impertinent cook downstairs says she is sending for an officer."

Van Dorn sprang to his feet with a suppressed exclamation. He saw before him busy hours and numerous explanations; but it is well that he did not grasp in all their details the painful experiences which were to fill the twenty-four hours intervening before he finally left Mrs. Crosby settled in the furnished home she had actually engaged in quite another part of London.

This was, however, as he subsequently told himself, merely a prelim-

inary canter before the actual races of the season, for Mrs. Crosby and his ward kept him increasingly and most happily busy as the weeks passed.

His life, in fact, became a singularly full one, for he had not only to establish his ward and her temporary chaperon in a fitting home, but he must also look up a suitable school for Naomi, have his friends call on her, and incidentally see to it that she had the simple outings and diversions suited to her age and her condition of recent bereavement. Then, too, she must learn London, and Van Dorn marveled a little and prided himself a great deal over the cheerful willingness with which he did the honors of the Tower, of Westminster Abbey, of the National Gallery, the Waxworks and the other institutions to which each loyal young Englishwoman should be introduced at the first possible moment. Best of all, he liked their long walks among the Dickens haunts and their chats under the trees in Kensington Gardens, when she compared the old life with this new and interesting one and painted for him unconsciously pictures of the past, full of the vivid color of their Indian setting. Then there were flying weeks in country houses, when his women friends took the child at once to their motherly bosoms, and where she, on her part, reveled in the beauty and "homeyness" of English country life, under which she expanded as a plant in the sun; and after all this came the autumn and the gray day, when she went to school.

When he left her there and returned to town, Van Dorn was conscious of a depression which he in vain assured himself was wholly out of reason. He was free to do many things he had really missed during the past two months, but there was singularly little zest in the prospect. To one whose personal freedom all through life had been absolute and zealously guarded, it had not always been easy, of late, to consider another in making engagements and to turn up at certain places on the stroke of the clock, regardless of his own friends or plans. But some-

how the return now to entire freedom was not exhilarating. Van Dorn dined at his favorite club, ordered and gloomily ate an admirable dinner and deeply grieved his devoted waiter by the grumpiness with which he scorned that youth's disinterested suggestions.

There was no getting away from the fact that he missed the child—he missed her horribly. Things failed to interest him and his friends bored him. Naturally, however, this condition could not last, and as the days went on it must be admitted that he cheered perceptibly and took a more than languid interest in the material joys of life. But it was surprising how he thought of her—how her light words returned to him—how associated with her London itself had become.

It was almost a week before her first letter reached him. She had been very busy, she told him, getting settled and meeting the girls and trying to adjust herself to the wholly new conditions of English school life. She had discovered, too, she said, that her governess in India had cherished ideas as to education which differed radically from those prevailing in the institution Naomi now adorned.

"I'm away ahead of the other girls in some studies," she wrote, "but away, 'way behind in a great many others. I shall have to take private lessons and study hard."

Van Dorn liked this, but he liked still better the lines which followed. The little unconscious revelation of loneliness moved him, but his man's vanity bloomed sturdily, while his heart was touched by the childishly frank confession of her liking for him.

"I think of you so much," she wrote, "and of the good times we had. We *did* have *such* good times, didn't we? You were *so* good to me? How dreadful it would be if I did not like you, or if you did not like me! But we *do* like each other, don't we, and we are going to live together in our home? Have you thought of a name yet? I think of it so much, but the very right name has not come. But it must be a house something like Cicely Lamberton's—

red brick, and big and rambling and covered with roses and with sun-dials and peacocks and Jersey cows and things, and a little river with a rustic bridge, and brooks besides, and a red-brick dairy with dairymaids. I don't want a great big cold, formal place like Graydon Towers. Our home must be *homey*, and you must have your guns and fishing-rods and things in the halls, and there must be big open fire-places everywhere with enormous logs in them. And I'd like to see your gloves lying around on tables. Have we got plenty of money? Perhaps all this will cost a great deal, but papa said I have more than a reasonable girl needed. If we haven't enough, a *little* red-brick place will do. And I'm not a bit homesick for India any more. I think England is the very nicest place in the world to have a home in."

Van Dorn laid down the closely written pages with a chuckle. She *had* plenty of money. So had he. He almost regretted her fortune. Later it would bring undesirable persons around her. But she could have anything she wanted, and it warmed his heart to know how wholly he was included in this dream home of hers. She would like to see his gloves lying around on tables! He grinned affectionately. In his heart he had not a doubt that she would thus see them often enough. He was immaculate personally, but appallingly careless as to his belongings. She must have noticed the heaped-up aspect of his tables when she and Mrs. Crosby had dined at his rooms. This memory and the home-like informality of life at the Lambertons' had made their impression on her susceptible mind, so quick to notice everything in this new strange land that was yet her own.

"Yes, we have plenty," he told her in his reply. "So go on planning, and when the time comes we will turn this pleasant dream of ours into very real red-brick houses and red-checked dairymaids and peacocks and cows. And you may be sure that my gloves will be on the tables, and probably most of my other things as well, unless you train

me properly. About the guns in the halls, I may have a gun-room, may I not? But of course we can spare a few guns for the halls, too!"

It was almost a fortnight before her reply came, and Van Dorn began to fear that he had treated too flippantly her pretty dream of home. But her first words reassured him.

"I have found a name," she began without further preface. "I like it. I hope you will. It is to be Vanaomi. It is made up of the beginning of your name and all of mine. Two friends of papa's in India named their house that way, using both their names, and it was so nice. For of course nobody else can name their home like ours. We will have the only Vanaomi in the world! Do like it. I shall be dreadfully unhappy if you don't. And *of course* you may have a gun-room! You may have anything. That is why *our* home is going to be so nice—because we are *both* going to have everything just the way we want it!"

"By Jove!" said Van Dorn to himself as he read this letter. "I'm actually beginning to take it seriously. I believe it would be a good thing to do. Of course," he reflected comfortably, "if it gets monotonous at any time, one can always cut away for a year or two. But it sounds like a mighty comfy place to come back to!"

He replied with fitting enthusiasm, and the dream structure rose higher as the months passed. Vanaomi, it was decided, should be in a certain part of Kent—to which Naomi had taken a great fancy during several visits to the Lambertons. And now, as time went on, the child began to furnish it, in fancy, and her letters were largely given up to matters of decoration, hangings, furniture and the beautifying of grounds. Many of her ideas were, of course, impossible. A few of them, possibly the results of her Indian training, were distinctly bizarre. But on the whole her taste was good, and Van Dorn followed with growing interest and amazement the steady perfecting of Vanaomi. Her interest in it never relaxed. It is true she wrote of school

affairs, of school friends, of outings, of teachers she liked and—with gentle reserve—of one or two she did not like. But all these were incidental features of her letters.

The real object, for her, was the home—their home, Vanaomi; and within a year she had built it, furnished it completely, and added even the actual details, in their proper setting, of sun-dials, peacocks and dairymaids—all on paper. For her the home existed, and Van Dorn himself had often a surprisingly vivid sense of actuality in connection with it. He knew exactly the spot where the sun-dial stood, for she had told him. He saw the small herd of Jersey cows in the precise meadow where they belonged. He stood in fancy on the rustic bridge spanning the little river, looking down at its rushing tide. She had clipped from some magazine a picture of a bridge she liked and had marked on it certain changes to be made in their bridge. Van Dorn carefully laid away the crude little plan. He knew now that some day he would build that bridge and stand on it, as in their dream.

They spent their Christmas holidays at the Lambertons', he and Naomi, and she went to the same ideal home for the long summer leave. Van Dorn was there frequently, and again the second summer. For the Lambertons' place was more like Vanaomi than any other, and even after two years Naomi's interest in that dream home was still fresh, still growing.

She was eighteen then, and Van Dorn looked fearfully for some sign of self-consciousness, some dimming of the exquisite innocence of her attitude toward him. But there was no change. It was wholly evident that she thought of him as a father, or at best as an elder brother. She was beginning to talk of the brothers of her friends, of young Frank Lamberton, and Philip Nesbit, and of a certain handsome tutor at school, but her interest in them seemed largely impersonal. Van Dorn recognized this with a long breath of relief. He told himself that he could well be patient. He could wait. He

must not speak too soon. When the fitting time came he could, he believed, change that frank camaraderie of hers into something better. For he had long ceased to disguise from himself the nature of his feelings and his hopes. Waking and sleeping they were the same. He lived them, he dreamed them—Naomi and Vanaomi, always those two—the girl and the home she was planning. In the meantime, he was very busy down in Kent, for Naomi was to graduate in three months more and he had much to do in the interval.

His friends recognized the rejuvenation in him, and possibly suspected the cause. He was very happy, and very manly and mellow and fine in his happiness. For was he not receiving every week Naomi's letters, full of Vanaomi, now so near realization, and of him, and of their life together? He had promised her that after her graduation they would seek and find their home. He had told her nothing of the surprise he was preparing.

She was to graduate in June. It was in March that an almost imperceptible change crept into her letters. Van Dorn, now used to all her moods and fancies, detected it at once and was not displeased. There was a little restraint, a little dawning of self-consciousness, less taking of things for granted. He interpreted it all in his own way.

"Someone has said something," he told himself. "Someone has pointed out to her that her idyllic plan is not quite possible. So much the better, for the time is ripe. Let her think it over. Then when I tell her what she is to me—good God, how *much* she is to me!—she may be ready to respond!"

The mere thought made his head swim. His wife, Naomi! The one woman in the world, as she had come to be, and needing him so greatly! There could be no question of the desirability of her marrying him, even looking at it from a purely worldly standpoint. Her father would have rejoiced. Quite possibly he had cherished some such plan. But Van Dorn told himself again that now he must

not wait too long. He would run over to Paris, join some friends for a little journey to the South of France, and immediately on his return go to Naomi and open his heart.

He went; and for years afterward he shunned France and turned with sick distaste from soft moonlight nights and views of straight dark poplars outlined stiffly against deep blue skies. These were associated with Naomi, with his dreams of her and home; and from these dreams there had come a rude awakening.

When he returned to London he found in his rooms the accumulated mail of his absence. There were several letters from her, and he opened first the one bearing the latest postmark. It was very short.

"I have been so disappointed not to hear from you," it ran; "so disappointed, and, yes, *hurt*, too. For surely you approve. You like Frank so much, and he likes and admires you. We've both been watching every mail. Possibly you are away. You have such a fashion of going off and leaving no address. It makes me unhappy not to hear—but, oh, Guardy, dear, *dear* Guardy, I'm so, so happy otherwise."

The big world reeled drunkenly as Van Dorn read the lines. For a moment he sat absolutely motionless. Then, with cold fingers, he opened another of her letters—a very long one—and found there the explanation he sought. It was dated three weeks back, and from the Lambertons', where she had spent a week-end.

"I have something very, very special to tell you, dearest and best of guardians," it began. Naomi always went straight to the point. Van Dorn found himself remembering this dizzily as the letters wavered before his eyes.

"Happy as I am, it makes me happier to know you will approve. For tonight—only tonight, though it seems so long ago—Frank asked me to marry him, and I said 'yes.' I think you have known; you have always known everything almost before I did. And you will be glad that I am happy, and that I will have a home when I

leave school. For Frank wants me to marry him as soon as I graduate. He says it is necessary, situated as I am, and he wants me to have a home to go to. You know how I have always longed for that. And you have been so good-natured and so kind in letting me talk *home, home, home*, as I have always done. I know you've never taken it seriously, and I'm sure I've bored you often. But it has meant so much to me. And now to know that I am really to have it and Frank both—it seems as if I cannot bear the happiness. What have I done that God should be so good? . . . Frank is writing you by this post. He says our new home shall be called Vanaomi. And you, dear, dear old Guardy, must live there with us when you are in England."

Van Dorn laid down the letter, and for an awful moment faced the future. All the loneliness of the years to come seemed to concentrate and settle upon him as he bowed his head to Fate. He thought of her—of Vanaomi. Vanaomi—no longer a dream, but a substantial structure down there in Kent: buildings, sun-dials, peacocks, bridge and all—the Vanaomi he had prepared during this past year, and the deed for which, made out in her name, was even now in his desk. It was to have been her graduation gift. Well, it should be her wedding gift instead. Frank was not the oldest son. He would not have Lamberton Hall.

Van Dorn rose stiffly, like an old man. Going slowly to his desk, he drew out a telegraph form and wrote a message:

MISS NAOMI CHURCHILL,
Care Sir Joseph Lamberton,
Lamberton Hall, Eltham, Kent.

Letters only just received. Back from the continent today. Highly approve. God bless you both. Am writing.

HERBERT VAN DORN.

He summoned his servant and sent the message. Then he walked to the window and stared unseeingly out into the mocking brilliance of a perfect April day.

"And we Van Dorns live to be eighty," he said slowly. "God!—how can I go through it all alone?"

A WOMAN

THE great Love that was not for her
 Passed on, nor paused to see
 The wistful eyes, the hands' vague stir,
 The mouth's mute misery.

The little Love she recked not of
 Crept closer bit by bit,
 Until for very lack of love
 She smiled and welcomed it.

Not hers to choose, to weigh and part
 The greater from the less;
 She only strove to fill a heart
 That ached with emptiness.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



OF SOME BENEFIT

HOBBS—It's of no use to tell a man that he's a fool.
 BOBBS—No, but it's a lot of satisfaction sometimes.



SELF-CONTROL

CLARA—How prettily you blush!
 MAUD—Really?
 “Oh, yes, indeed. I wish I could control myself like that.”



NODD—Didn't you tell your wife you'd meet her at one o'clock?
 TODD—Yes, but it's only one now; I've got an hour or so yet.

MORE ADVENTURES OF OILOCK COMBS

THE SUCCORED BEAUTY

By William B. Kahn

ONE night, as I was returning from a case of acute indigestion—it was immediately after my divorce and I was obliged to return to the practice of my profession in order to support myself—it chanced that my way homeward lay through Fakir street. As I reached the house where Combs and I had spent so many hours together, where I had composed so many of his adventures, an irresistible longing seized me to go once more upstairs and grasp my friend by the hand, for, if the truth must be told, Combs and I had had a tiff. I really did not like the way in which he had procured evidence for my wife when she sought the separation, and I took the liberty of telling Combs so, but he had said to me: “My dear fellow, it is my business, is it not?” and though I knew he was not acting properly I was forced to be placated. However, the incident left a little breach between us which I determined on this night to bridge.

As I entered the room I saw Combs nervously drinking a glass of soda water. Since I succeeded in breaking him of the morphine habit he had been slyly looking about for some other stimulant and at last he had found it. I sighed to see him thus employed.

“Good evening, Combs,” said I, extending my hand.

“Hello, Spotson,” cried he, ignoring my proffered digits. “You are well, I see. It really is too bad, though, that you have no servant again. You seem to have quite some trouble

with your help.” And he chuckled as he sipped the soda water.

Familiar as I was with my friend’s powers, this extraordinary exhibition of them really startled me.

“Why, Oilock,” said I, calling him, in my excitement, by his prænomen, “how did you know it?”

“Perfectly obvious, Spotson, perfectly obvious. Merely observation,” answered Combs as he took out his harmonica and began playing a tune thereon.

“But how?” persisted I.

“Well, if you really wish to know,” he replied, as he ceased playing, “I suppose I will be obliged to tell you. I see you have a small piece of court-plaster upon the index finger of your left hand. Naturally, a cut. But the plaster is so small that the cut must be very minute. ‘What could have done it?’ I ask myself. The obvious response is a tack, a pin or a needle. On a chance I eliminate the tack proposition. I take another chance and eliminate the pin. Therefore, it must have been the needle. ‘Why a needle?’ query I of myself. And glancing at your coat I see the answer. There you have five buttons, four of which are hanging on rather loosely while the fifth one is tightly sewn to the cloth. It had recently been sewn. The connection is now clear. You punctured your finger with the needle while sewing on the button. But,” he continued musingly and speaking, it seemed, more to himself than to me, “I never saw nor heard of the man who would sew unless he was com-

pelled to. Spotson always keeps a servant; why did she not sew the button on for him? The reply is childishly easy: his servant left him."

I followed his explanation with rapt attention. My friend's powers were, I was happy to see, as marvelous as they were when I lived with him.

"Wonderful, Combs, wonderful," I cried.

"Merely observation," he replied. "Some day I think that I shall write a monograph on the subject of buttons. It is a very interesting subject and the book ought to sell well. But, hello, what is this?"

The sound of a cab halting before the door caused Combs's remark. Even as he spoke there was a pull at the bell, then the sound of hasty footsteps on the stairs. A sharp knock sounded upon the door. Combs dropped into his armchair, stuck out his legs in his familiar way and then said: "Come in."

The door opened and there entered, in great perturbation, a young lady, twenty-three years of age, having on a blue tailor-made suit, patent-leather shoes and a hat with a black pompon ornamenting it. She wore some other things, but these were all that I noticed. Not so Combs. I could see by the penetrating glance he threw at her that her secret was already known to that astute mind.

"Thank heaven," she cried, turning to me, "that I have found you in!"

"Are you ill, madam?" I began; but suddenly realizing that I was not in my office but in Combs's consultation-room, I drew myself up stiffly and said: "That is Mr. Combs."

The young lady turned to him. Then, lifting her handkerchief to her beautiful eyes she burst into tears as she said: "Help me, help me, Mr. Combs."

The great man did not reply. An answer to such a remark he would have regarded as too trivial. The lady took down her handkerchief and, after glancing dubiously at me, said to Mr. Combs: "Can I see you privately?"

Once, and once only did I ever be-

fore or, indeed, since, see such a look of rage on Combs's face. That was when Professor O'Flaherty and he had that altercation in Switzerland. (See "Memoirs of Oilock Combs." Arper & Co. \$1.50.)

"Madam," said he in frigid tones, "whatever you desire to say to me you may say before Dr. Spotson. How under the sun, woman," he cried, losing control of himself for a moment, "would the public know of my adventures if he were not here to write them?"

I threw Combs a grateful look while he reached for the soda water. The visitor was momentarily crushed. At last, however, she recovered her equanimity.

"Well, then," she said, "I will tell you my story."

"Pray, begin," said Combs rather testily.

"My name is Ysabelle, Duchess of Swabia," the visitor commenced.

"One moment, please," interrupted Combs. "Spotson, kindly look up that name in my index."

I took down the book referred to, in which Combs had made thousands of notes of people and events of interest, and found between "Yponomeutidæ" and "yttrium" the following item, which I read aloud:

"Ysabelle, Duchess of Swabia; Countess of Steinheimbach; Countess of Riesendorf, etc., etc. Born at Schloss Ochsenfuss, February 29, 1876. Her mother was the Duchess Olga, of Zwiefelfeld, and her father was Hugo, Duke of Kaffeeküchen. At three years of age she could say 'ha, ha!' in German, French, English, Italian and Spanish. Between the ages of five and fifteen she was instructed by Professor Grosskopf, the eminent philosopher of the University of Kleinplatz. By sixteen her wisdom teeth had all appeared. A very remarkable woman!"

As I read this last sentence, the duchess again burst into tears.

"Pray, pray, compose yourself, duchess," said Combs, taking a pipe from the table and filling it with some tobacco which he absent-mindedly took from my coat-pocket.

The duchess succeeded in calming herself. Then, rising majestically and

gazing at Combs with those wonderful eyes which had played havoc with so many royal hearts, she said, in solemn tones:

"I am lost!"

The manner in which she made this statement as well as the declaration itself seemed to make a deep impression upon Combs. Without uttering one word he sat there for fully four minutes. The way in which he puffed nervously at the pipe showed me that he was thinking. Suddenly, with an exclamation of delight, he dashed out of the room and down the stairs, leaving the amazed duchess and myself in his apartments. But not for long. In forty-three seconds he was again in the room and, dropping into his chair thoroughly exhausted, he triumphantly cried:

"I have it!"

Never had I seen my friend wear such a look of victory. The achievement which merited such an expression upon his countenance must have been remarkable. By and bye he recovered from his fatigue. Then he spoke.

"Madam," he said, "I have the answer."

The duchess sobbed in ecstasy.

Combs continued:

"The moment that you said you were lost," he began, "an idea came to me. You must have noticed, Spotson, how preoccupied I seemed before.

Well, that is the sign of an idea coming to me. Before it had time to vanish I dashed down the steps, into the vestibule, looked at the number of this house and jotted it down. Madam," he cried, drawing out a book and looking at one of the pages, "madam, you are saved! You are no longer lost! This is No. 62 Fakir street. You are found!"

During this entire recital the duchess had not said a word. When Combs had finished she stood for a moment as if she did not understand and then, realizing the fact that she was rescued, she wept once more.

"My savior," she cried as she prepared to leave the room, "how can I ever thank you?" And she pressed into Combs's outstretched hand a large gold-mesh, diamond-studded purse.

The door closed, the carriage rolled away and the Duchess of Swabia was gone.

"Spotson," said Combs to me, "don't forget to write this one down. It has a duchess in it and will sell well to cooks and chambermaids. By the way, I wonder what she gave me."

He opened the purse and there, neatly folded, lay two hundred pounds in bills.

"Bah!" cried Combs contemptuously, "how ungrateful these royal personages always are."



IDENTIFYING HIM

VOICE (*from head of stairs*)—Is that you, John?

"Yes——"

"I thought I recognized your stagger."



THE devil tips his hat to Ignorance very often, thinking that he has recognized Innocence.

THE ETERNAL MASCULINE

"SUPPOSE we stroll down by the sea—
The air's much cooler there," said he.
"Oh, no," she answered him; "I think
'Tis quite *too* cool, so near the brink."

"Then, let us go indoors, and sing—
Or, let's play chess—the very thing!"
"Indoors?" she said, with pouting charm,
"Indoors is sure to be *too* warm!"

"Well, say we pace the garden through,
In the sweet dark—just I and you!"
She promptly cried, "But I should get—
I always do—my slippers wet!"

He gazed, perplexed at his lot;
He never dreamed she'd rather not
By lamplight bright or starlight dim
Go anywhere at all—with *him*!

MADLINE BRIDGES.



OF COURSE

"I AM afraid this book is too improper to put in our village library."
"Well, if it is, it won't be necessary, anyway."
"Why not?"
"Because everybody has probably read it."



HE—It seems to me we ought to celebrate the anniversary of our engagement, as well as marriage.

SHE—Why so?

"Well, that was the original cause of all the trouble."

BLINNY'S ASPIRATIONS

By Robert Mackay

“**I**S this Mr. Barwag, the florist?” asked a thin-lipped, clean-shaven man, who peered over his eyeglasses as he talked.

“Yep,” replied the individual addressed.

“Have you a person in your employ named Henry Popple Blinny?”

Barwag, who was evolving a funeral pillow from a pile of moss and immortelles, viciously dabbed some of the latter into his creation ere he snortingly remarked:

“No, but I have a chap named ‘Hen’ who works for me.”

The visitor smiled communingly with himself. “Is he to be seen?” he asked.

Barwag stabbed the pillow once more in a discontented sort of fashion.

“S’pose so; but mind you, I pay my men for their time, and when people take up my men’s time they are just taking so much money out of my pocket.”

The clean-shaven man replied drily: “If ‘Hen,’ as you term him, turns out to be the person whom I imagine he is, you will probably have an opportunity of taking money out of his pocket.”

“What d’ye mean?” answered the florist, with a sullen sort of curiosity. The visitor pulled a card from his pocket, and handed it to the other, which indicated that he was a member of the law firm of BILDYKE & CORDY, Broadway Building, New York.

“‘Hen,’ that is, Mr. Blinny—or, in any event, a person so christened, has fallen heir to a considerable estate. I wish to see him.”

Barwag escorted Mr. Cordy to his

private office and said that Henry Popple Blinny had been working for him for a couple of years, and he was a mighty good chap, too, only a bit “daffy” over his clothes and about what the “swell guys” were doing.

“And,” added the florist, “to keep him from going quite dippy, I sometimes give him a spell of potting, so as he can get his purty hands and lovely duds good and dirty.”

“Will you please call him?” said Mr. Cordy.

Mr. Barwag regretfully removed his gaze from the lawyer and fixed it on the telephone. Presently “Hen” appeared. He was a tall, rather good-looking young fellow, “mussed up” as Mr. Barwag declared he would be, so far as clothing was concerned, and he wore what seemed to be a pair of brown kid gloves, which were in reality coatings of rich loam. His hair was parted in the middle and his face was bare, for he was a religious observer of current styles in men’s wear, in which he included whiskers and mustaches.

“Is this Mr. Blinny?” asked the lawyer.

Henry ducked his head in an uncertain fashion.

“Born in the town of Liberty, New York?”

Henry nodded.

“Son of Michael and Mary Blinny?”

Again Henry bobbed his head, but looked uneasily at his employer.

“Nephew of Charles Popple Blinny?”

“Yes; I suppose,” replied Henry, shuffling uncomfortably, “but what do you want to know all this for?”

“Answer the gentleman, you consarned, infernal fool! Answer him!”

roared Barwag, as his hands stole toward a large garden trowel.

"I have excellent reasons for putting these questions to you," said the lawyer blandly, "for if you are the Henry Popple Blinny whom we—that is, my partner and I—believe you to be, I am here to notify you that under the provisions of the will of Charles Popple Blinny, deceased, once of New York, and later of Blastboy, Nevada, and Blue War, Colorado, you are sole heir to the estate of the said deceased, amounting to about seven hundred thousand dollars."

From his youth Henry Popple Blinny had had yearnings after the unattainable. How he came to be possessed of these yearnings it is hard to imagine and more difficult to tell. His immediate ancestors were good, honest folk who had never traveled outside a radius of thirty miles from their native village in New York, where Blinny *père* had pursued the harmless, necessary vocation of a harnessmaker.

Henry was, in his way, as whole-souled a tuft-hunter as the veriest lord-and-lady adoring cockney that ever haunted Rotten Row during the London season. Society, as he understood it, was the pole-star of his existence around which his small hopes and smaller aspirations revolved. His sole aim in life was to get to New York to see some of the divinities whom he worshiped, and whose likenesses, clipped from the metropolitan dailies, adorned his walls. The region of heaven was to him somewhere on Fifth avenue. Ultimate bliss, so he considered, consisted in hearing and seeing the persons whose doings at Newport and Palm Beach were reported in the newspapers. When in the course of human events his parents lessened the available space in the family burying-ground, Henry, gathering together the few dollars that came to him, hied to New York, where the natural sequence of events followed. In a few weeks he found himself at the end of his resources with nothing in sight in the way of a job. But one day the spell was

broken and Barwag engaged him at the modest stipend of "eight dollars per."

Mr. Barwag's establishment was on Sixth avenue not so many removes from Central Park. Consequently much of his trade was among people whose names appear in the society columns, sometimes through the courtesy of reporters, but still more frequently because they sent information by post. Now Henry's duties occasionally called him to the houses of these people, where he had the ecstatic pleasure of being bullied by the plump and unusually dumpy matrons of whom he had read. But his fancy grew by what it was fed upon. From being content with delivering cut flowers, he began to try to copy the garments of Mr. Barwag's male patrons, and, on Sunday, took part in the church parade, where, thanks to the kindly Providence that endows the ignorant with moral strabismus, he enjoyed himself hugely.

From being part of a sequence, his yearning for society developed into a hobby, and from that to something approximating mania. It was about this juncture that Mr. Cordy paid Mr. Barwag the memorable visit.

During the period which followed the lawyer's call and the settlement of the estate, Henry Popple Blinny was like one in a dream. However, Henry had sense enough to know that he needed some friendly guidance. He said as much to Mr. Cordy, under whose direction he had installed himself in a suite of apartments in an uptown bachelor hotel of a very smart and very exclusive sort. The apartments had been occupied by a refined and wealthy bachelor, and contained the many and varied conveniences such a man would require. A private tutor was engaged to coach him educationally and in those things which are supposed to be contingent upon the possession of riches.

Henry began to enjoy the new situation. In spite of all efforts on the part of his legal adviser to prevent it, the news of his good fortune had become public. Several times a day a pile of

mail was brought to him addressed to Henry Popple Blinny, Esq., which title he enjoyed amazingly. The most of this mail was from those birds and beasts of prey which always gather around a promising financial carcass.

Henry was at last on the eve of attaining the chief ambition of his life—that of being master of a real, live, English valet; one preferably who had been a “man” to a British nobleman, or, failing that, who had acted in a like capacity to somebody of the Newport set. His desire in this regard had been confided to Mr. Cordy, and the latter had written him that he had secured a treasure who had been a valet to no less than three Englishmen of title. Mr. Cordy added that he had had a good deal of difficulty in persuading the distinguished person to enter the Blinny employ, inasmuch as he, the valet, had somewhat of a disinclination to attach himself to anything less than a British baronet. But as Henry had given him, Cordy, *carte blanche* in the matter of salary, the valet had been induced to become Henry’s “man.”

So when Henry reached home one evening he found awaiting him a man of medium height and uncertain age, having a sallow complexion and a cleanly shaven face, from which all expression save that of respectful deference seemed to have been deftly expunged. He was neatly dressed, and while, at first glance, he did not seem to be possessed of any unusual characteristics, he impressed one with his deferential respectfulness, which seemed to exude from every pore of his person. Henry felt that he was subject to that critical scrutiny which is only possible in a thoroughly finished gentleman’s gentleman. With that consciousness came a realization of the fact that he was the owner of many defects of person, carriage, garments and surroundings. This feeling was distinctly discomforting.

The person in question arose as Henry entered, came to attention, bowed and said with dignified humility: “My name is Widgit, sir; Matthew

Widgit. I believe that Mr. Cordy has spoken to you about me.”

“Well?” said Mr. Blinny, with an effort, and he knew that his voice sounded thin and croaky. He had noticed with disappointment that the valet used excellent English and had no trace of the cockney accent that he hoped his “man” would assuredly possess.

“Well?” said Mr. Blinny once more, feeling that he was bound to say something and inwardly cursing Mr. Cordy for not having tutored him on “How to Converse with and Act in the Presence of Your Valet.” Again his voice sounded as if he was whispering to himself from the far end of a cracked gas main.

Widgit’s countenance changed not an iota. “Mr. Cordy, I believe, spoke to you, sir, about me, and I was told that you wished to see me this evening.”

“Certainly, certainly,” blurted Henry; “glad to see you.” Then, checking himself, he added, with an almost ferocious gravity, “I mean—that is—where’s your luggage, Widgit?” and he glanced around the hall as if Widgit had violated all the ethics of “valetology” by not bringing his trunks with him.

“It will be here tomorrow,” replied Widgit icily. “In the meantime, sir, I’ve my handbag.”

“Why, certainly,” replied Henry, and then the frost of Widgit’s presence nipped his momentary effusiveness in the bud. A pause, slight but to Henry distinctly awkward, followed. It was broken by the tactful Widgit inquiring if he, Henry, had anything that he could take upstairs with him.

“Why, no, Widgit,” answered the valet’s employer, his teeth chattering a trifle as he ventured on the valet by his second name. Widgit bowed and stood at attention by the side of the elevator door, and Henry felt the respectful respectability of his employee weigh yet more heavily upon him.

When the elevator arrived at the floor on which were the Blinny apartments Widgit stepped out first and as-

sisted Mr. Blinny to alight by putting a tender and respectful hand underneath his elbow. Again Henry felt how utterly unworthy he was of the condescending attention on the part of such a gentlemanly personage, and was tempted to say, "After you, sir, after you," and point the way to the apartment entrance. Widgit respectfully asked for the Blinny keys, and with an intuition that seemed to Henry nothing short of marvelous, selected the right one on the instant, opened the door of the apartment and again stood at attention while his employer passed in.

Henry walked to the end of the hall to his den, and finding that Widgit was timidly loitering behind, called cheerfully, "Come in, Mr.—I mean, Widgit, come right in," and forthwith felt that he had again committed some breach of etiquette that offended the professional susceptibility of his "man." Widgit obeyed to the extent of remaining just inside of the doorway and waited for instructions. It was only about eight o'clock in the evening. Henry could think of nothing better to say than, "If you are tired you can go to bed, you know."

"Thank you, sir," said Widgit, with refrigerated gratitude; "but I am not tired. Will you please let me have the keys of your wardrobe, and will you take a bath tonight, sir, and what temperature do you wish your bath to be?"

At that moment, happily for Henry, the gist of a passage in some novel he had read long before came to him, and he murmured thus:

"I prefer, you know, that my 'man' attend to all these things, you know. Too beastly tired, you know, to think about them, Widgit."

Widgit's countenance was unmoved. "Thank you, sir; and the keys are——?"

"Here, you know," said Henry, producing them from his pocket, feeling that he had made a palpable hit with Widgit.

Widgit retired, or to be more correct, disappeared like a shadow, and Henry, who had recovered himself somewhat, thanked the stars for his

disappearance and began to enjoy himself, but not for long. In the space of five minutes Widgit reappeared.

"Do you desire any refreshment, sir?" he asked.

"No," said Henry.

"Will you go out again tonight, sir?"

"No, thank you, Widgit."

The valet bowed and became invisible while Henry emitted a sigh of relief. But ere the sigh had quite exuded, Widgit was back again, slippers in hand and a lounging-robe over his arm. Without a word and before the astounded Henry Popple Blinny realized what he was doing, he had begun to unlace the Blinny shoes. Henry shrank from the touch of his fingers, and began, "Here, I say, I"—but as his eyes met the inquiring glance of his "man" he went on, "It's all right. I was going to say I thought I'd go out after all, but I guess I won't."

"Yes, sir," replied Widgit respectfully, and drew off the Blinny shoes as tenderly as a mother removes the sandals of her babe. Next, he adjusted the Blinny slippers, and, almost before its owner knew it, had coaxed off the Blinny street coat. Henry then felt dexterous fingers fluttering around his collar and necktie, and they vanished as if by some trick of legerdemain. Then Mr. Blinny found himself arrayed in a lounging-robe, with Widgit standing behind him laden with the articles of apparel that had been removed. With that he disappeared only to reappear again like a respectful phantom, without physical motion.

"Do you smoke, sir?"

Henry felt that Widgit's efforts in his behalf should be rewarded with acquiescence, and he replied weakly that he did. Widgit, after an all-embracing glance around the room, drew a smoking-table conveniently near to Henry's right hand, opened a cellaret, produced two boxes of cigars, flicked the lids open dexterously, and standing in front of his employer presented them deferentially. Depositing the boxes on the smoking-table, he took the selected cigar daintily from betwixt

his employer's fingers, nipped the tip with a cigar-cutter, lit a match, and re-presented the cigar, holding the match in such a position that Henry had nothing to do but luxuriously puff at the weed. Then he moved the boxes a trifle so that they might be handy for future reference, saw that the newspapers were within easy reach, and once more resolved himself into nothingness.

Somewhat recovered from the first shock of Widgit's introduction into his life, and after smoking his cigar, Henry glanced at the cellaret, selected another weed, peeped over his shoulder at the door, and rose. As he did so he pushed his chair back with some little noise, and there was Widgit on the instant.

"Did you want me, sir?"

"No—yes—that is, I'll—if you please"—desperately—"get me a drink."

The cellaret door flew open at Widgit's touch, and coming to attention again, he asked, "What do you usually take, sir?"

Henry Popple Blinny hesitated. As a matter of fact, if he had dared, he would have sent Widgit to the nearest saloon for ten cents' worth of lager beer, that being the insistence of his plebeian taste. As it was, he said that he would have some brandy-and-soda, which, as he knew, the majority of Ouida's six-foot heroes drank steadily.

Widgit opened one of those British bottles of soda which refuse to stand on their own bottoms, and miraculously suppressed the pop of the cork. After his master had imbibed Widgit once more disappeared.

"Now," thought Henry, "I've got rid of him for the night."

He walked on tiptoe to his chamber, and, as he opened the door, he heard a slight noise behind him, and glancing over his shoulder like a haunted man saw Widgit standing in a shadowy-like attitude of military attention. The next moment Widgit had managed to insinuate himself into the room. He turned up the light, and took possession of Henry's person.

Before Henry knew exactly what had happened, he found himself arrayed in his pajamas and sitting on the edge of the bed being divested of slippers and hose. Widgit respectfully drew down the bed covering, whereupon Henry, feeling that he had reverted to the days of his extreme childhood and that Widgit was the reincarnation of a maiden aunt who used to play nurse in the Blinny household, got into bed meekly and was duly tucked in. Then his valet, after receiving a negative response to his respectful, "Anything more, sir?" lowered the gas and retired, closing the door noiselessly after him.

When Henry awoke next morning it was with the conviction that something had happened; whether of a pleasant or unpleasant nature, he was unable to say. His sensations were much akin to those of a small boy who had robbed an orchard on the previous night and feels that he has pleasant plunder in his possession, but at the same time is not quite sure but he will be made to pay for it through the medium of the horny hand of father. Realization came to him when he heard a tap on his chamber door, and in response to his, "Come in," there was a murmured, "Door is locked, sir." Henry, with a gaunt expression of disgust, hopped out of bed, withdrew the bolt, and with a couple of agile bounds again reached the snug fastness of the blankets.

"Your bath is ready, sir," said Widgit, with that beautiful touch to the long "a" so envied by American snobs, and stood waiting.

Henry eyed his "man" over the edge of the counterpane mutinously. Had he dared—but then he didn't dare, and, as he felt, there was no use of meditating on things that he would never dream of attempting. Besides, there was that in Widgit's appearance that morning which precluded a violation of conventionalities. He was faultlessly dressed in a dark cutaway suit the coat of which was closely buttoned. His hair was sleeked, and his shoes highly polished. He looked de-

pressingly neat and clean. After a discreet pause, he said, "It is nine o'clock, sir, and your bath is ready." Then he resolved himself into a statue of deferential patience with his eyes discreetly fixed upon nothing in particular and the opposite wall in general.

"All right," replied Mr. Blinny, and waited wondering what would come next.

"Yes, sir," murmured Widgit, and waited also.

Finding that Widgit was immovable and at length comprehending that the ethics of the situation called for action, Henry got out of bed, and was instantly and by some hocus-pocus on the part of Widgit enveloped in a bath-robe. He suddenly became conscious of the fact that his toes and slippers had met. Being urged by the unspoken suggestion of his "man," he walked toward the bathroom, entered, and turned to close the door, but found Widgit at his elbow. He glanced at Widgit, but Widgit remained immovable.

"You needn't wait," said the master, and the "man" for once looked a little surprised, but with a respectful, "Yes, sir," retired. Then Henry, who was beginning to feel as if he was possessed of a well-recommended Frankenstein, turned the key in the lock and tumbled into the tub, rejoicing greatly in his temporary freedom from the all-seeing eye of Widgit. After a period of sousing and swashing he began to handle the towels vigorously, when there was instantly heard the insinuating tap of Widgit on the door.

"Do you want any help, sir?"

"No," growled Henry, who was beginning to wonder if he had to go through life saddled with his retainer's perpetual attention. But when he had resumed his bath-robe, Widgit, who seemed to have an eye with an X-ray faculty for penetrating the woodwork, again tapped on the door and remarked in the same tone of monotonous respectability that he had Mr. Blinny's razors and shaving water ready. Henry, feeling that further resistance was useless, wearily led the way to his dressing-room. There he

was duly shaved, Widgit seeming to know by instinct every tender spot on his employer's cheeks and chin. It was very pleasant, although the superiority of Widgit continued to be depressing, so much so that Henry felt himself wishing again and again that he was in the little underground shop on Sixth avenue where the Italian artist, for ten cents, gave him odors of garlic and items of news as well as professional attention.

Henry Popple was rapidly reaching that stage of the game when a man feels that he must drift instead of attempting to breast the current of circumstances. He made no movement when the shave was ended, but remained inert, mentally and physically, wondering dreamily what would happen next. Widgit placed a respectful hand on the nape of his neck and raised his head and body.

"Don't want any bay rum," murmured Henry, unconsciously reverting to the period when bay rum cost an extra five cents. Then he blushed, feeling that Widgit knew all too well what prompted the remark. He also seemed to detect a world of sarcasm in his valet's gentle, "No, sir."

"What morning wear, sir?" queried Widgit, at the same time twirling Henry around in the revolving chair so that his eyes might rest on the several suits which had been laid out for approval on a long dressing-table. Like most young men who have money, Henry was liberal with himself in the matter of clothes. Hitherto, he had rejoiced exceedingly in the contents of his wardrobe, but now, in the presence of a valet who had served under three owners of titles and who consequently must have been familiar with the creations of Poole of London, Henry's trousers and coats and waistcoats seemed to be very mean and cheap.

"Anything you like, Widgit." And Widgit, looking at his master critically, as if to see the particular complexion tint that he wore that morning, sped his eye swiftly over the garments and selected one of a cool gray, and then——

In after years, when Henry pondered on that first morning with his valet, he marveled by what means of sleight-of-hand Widgit managed to incase him in his togs. The truth remains, however. Henry Popple Blinny, on emerging from a mild trance, found himself fully clad with the exception of his coat. A fashionable collar, an exquisitely tied black silk bow, a very thin gold watch-chain and patent-leather shoes were parts of his attire. Even to Henry's untutored eye he could see that there was a subtle harmony in the incidents of this get-up that involved everything from the hue of his hose to the pattern of his shirt.

Then, still passive, Henry permitted Widgit to slip on his house-coat before he started for the breakfast-room. Would Mr. Blinny have a cocktail? Mr. Blinny declined. Then Widgit put the morning papers and some periodicals within reach and waited.

"Well?" asked Henry.

Would Mr. Blinny breakfast in his own apartments or in the hotel restaurant? Mr. Blinny, with a spasm of secret joy and relief, declared for the restaurant, and added hastily that Widgit needn't accompany him. Widgit gave an attenuated bow, and, telepathically, Henry knew that he had once more put his foot in it, and that it was not customary for gentlemen to eat in hotel restaurants with their valets standing behind their chairs.

During the meal Henry began to wonder as to whether, after all, there was as much fun in being possessed of a valet as he had previously imagined. He felt that while the idea was all right, there was something wrong somewhere when it came to putting it into practice. He prolonged the meal as much as possible, feeling that when the time came for him to go upstairs again he would become the thrall of Widgit. But fate and the elevator at length bore him upward, and, ere he could open his apartment door it opened with the assistance of Widgit, who, deductively, must have had an eye at the keyhole waiting for his employer's return.

Henry was strongly tempted to ask, "What shall I do now, Widgit?" but restrained himself and walked gloomily into his den, which he felt was no longer his. Throwing himself into a chair he sat and waited, even as one waits for the thunder-clap that follows a flash of lightning. "Any orders, sir?" said the valet.

The resolution that comes of desperation was strong upon Henry. "No," he blurted; "I want to be alone—to smoke, to write, to think, to read!"

Even as he spoke Mr. Blinny felt, more than saw, the quintet of microscopic bows on the part of Widgit, with which the latter indorsed each desire. As he counted the fifth bow, Henry felt the culmination of a corresponding number of little reliefs. But—Widgit went to the telephone and communicated with the hotel office, and Henry overheard him instruct the clerk that Mr. Blinny desired to see no one. Returning he arranged the smoking-table, the cigars, the desk and the necessary stationery, asked Henry if there were any particular books he desired, or would he confine himself to newspapers, arranged the shades so that the light should be properly distributed, and, after some five or ten minutes consumed in these preparations, vanished.

"And," said Henry to himself, "Mr. Cordy is going to call this morning, my tailor has an appointment with me, also my bootmaker is due here at eleven-thirty. This means that I shall have Widgit buzzing around me for the next half-hour, I suppose."

Noon came and with it the familiar tap on the door. Widgit desired to know if Mr. Blinny intended to lunch in his own rooms. Mr. Blinny replied, with some warmth, that he certainly would not. Did Mr. Blinny wish to order luncheon in the hotel restaurant, and if so, at what hour? Mr. Blinny answered that he did not know where he was going to lunch, but that it would not be in the hotel. Would Mr. Blinny be pleased to say what suit he would select for his afternoon wear? Mr. Blinny, with a note of exasperation

in his voice, answered that the suit he had on was good enough for him.

"For afternoon wear, sir?" queried Widgit, with just the faintest suggestion of surprise.

The unhappy Henry felt himself tingle with mortification as it came to him that gentlemen, real gentlemen, always change their clothes about noon, and he cursed the fashion as he realized that this would mean more attention on the part of Widgit. A wave of revolt swept over him, but the eye of Widgit was upon him, and it fell as quickly as it had risen. Yet the idea of being undressed and once more dressed by his finished servitor was a thing not to be lightly considered or accepted.

It was with something akin to "goose-flesh" that he rose despondently and walked to his dressing-room, where ensued a repetition of the scenes and actions of the earlier hours, with the exception that several afternoon suits occupied the place of the morning attire on the dressing-table. At length the ordeal was finished and Henry surveyed himself in a long cheval-glass. It must be admitted Widgit was worthy of his hire, thought Henry as he looked upon his trousers creased to a knife-edge, the faultlessly brushed frock-coat which Widgit had pulled here and twitched there so as to make it fit to perfection. The linen and haberdashery and the patent-leather shoes which shone like black mirrors were like the pictures that he used to admire so much in the windows of tailor shops. But Henry drew the line at a pair of white spats which Widgit had resurrected from a forgotten corner of the wardrobe.

"I don't want those things," said Mr. Blinny, with an emphasis that surprised himself.

"I beg pardon, sir," purred Widgit, with the utmost respect. "But Lord Chilcunstyle and Sir Henry Lactonshire always wore spats afternoons."

In view of these historic facts there was nothing else for Henry to do but to submit, in spite of the fact that he felt as if he had inadvertently stepped into a puddle of mortar. Widgit pro-

duced from somewhere a boutonniere of violets which he deftly inserted in the lapel of his master's coat, and then stood attention with stick, hat and gloves. After Henry had taken these articles Widgit gave a tiny twitch to the handkerchief that reposed in Mr. Blinny's outside pocket, in order that it might suggest itself without being absolutely seen to the world at large. Lastly, to Mr. Blinny's amazement, he began to perfume his employer with the assistance of a huge atomizer, the odor of the spray, as he ventured to intimate, exactly matching that of the boutonniere. The operation distantly suggested days of freedom and the Sixth avenue barber, and, if the truth must be known, Henry Popple Blinny sighed wistfully.

By the time it was all over it was nearly two o'clock, and Henry Popple was distinctly hungry. In view of his being dressed and of what he had told his valet, he could not consistently dine in the hotel. On the other hand, he had by no means overcome his hesitancy to patronize a fashionable caravansary, for he was rather doubtful about his table manners.

Nevertheless, it was a question of famine or of being subjected to more Widgit, and he chose the former. A cab was called, and he was whirled to the Waldorf-Astoria.

When, two hours later, Mr. Blinny emerged from the palm garden of the hotel he did so with emotions of a varied character. He had had a good luncheon, and his waiter, having some knowledge of human nature, gave him much attention, the tip being commensurate therewith. The vintages that accompanied the luncheon were excellent. His mental whirlpool consequently cast up among other thoughts something like this, "That he had lots of money and he didn't give a darn for anybody; that he would behave exactly as he liked; that he was out for a good time and intended to have it, and that he didn't propose to go through life hampered and harassed by Widgit. No, he was good and gol-darned if Widgit would boss *him* around!"

Filled with these resolutions and other things, he turned toward Fifth avenue, forgetful of the cabman who was still waiting for him until the latter reminded him of the fact.

"How much will it cost me?" asked Mr. Blinny, using what he fondly believed to be a Belgravian accent of the purest brand. Cabbie knew his man on the instant.

"I leave that to you, sir," he replied, touching his hat with a deference that went straight to Henry Popple Blinny's heart.

"How long have you been waiting, fellow?" asked Henry.

"Three hours, sir—about."

Mr. Blinny produced three five-dollar bills and handed them over.

"Thanks, sir; you are very kind, sir. Shall I call for you tomorrow, sir?"

Mr. Blinny seemed to reflect for a moment, and, incidentally, would have given his ears to be able to tell the diplomatic one to drive to some club. Failing that, he told the man to be on hand at the hotel the following morning, and departed.

On reaching Fifth avenue, Henry, still under the influence of the good luncheon and the diplomatic cabby, felt that he was one of the well-dressed crowd that was taking its afternoon promenade. So he walked northward. But even as he walked his exhilaration, as is the way with exhilarations, began to wax and wane. By the time that Central Park was reached the pendulum had swung the other way. He looked back along the Avenue. It was nearly five o'clock, and the well-dressed crowd was thinning out. A line of carriages, dog-carts, landaus and what not was filling the Park. Henry felt that if he were really among the elect his probable destination would be some club, where he could chat with friends or loaf in a quiet corner of the smoking-room until the time came for him to go home and dress for dinner.

There were three well-known hotels in sight, and his first impulse was to seek the harborage offered by their lobbies or cafés. But it occurred to him that a gentleman dressed in the height

of fashion, and wearing white spats at that, was not in the habit of being seen in hotel cafés. As for Fifth avenue itself, its growing sense of loneliness sickened and appalled him. He shrank from its now deserted pavements as a child shrinks from the dark.

Then he considered Central Park, but again it was borne on him that, appareled as he was, he would probably attract as much attention as the monkeys in their cages if he ventured to parade in solitary dignity through its green fastnesses. So he paused, bewildered, heartsick, lonely and with a knowledge of the falseness of his relation to himself and the world at large strong upon him.

After five or ten minutes of irresolution, and feeling that he must do something, he turned northward, walked a few blocks, retraced his steps, and hailing a cab was driven to his hotel. As he alighted the warmth and cheerfulness of the gregarious humanity in the lobby intensified his isolation. There were little knots of well-dressed people engaged in conversation. The restaurants gave glimpses of early diners, but in each and every instance, so it seemed to the unhappy Blinny, everyone was talking to somebody else, while he, alone of all the world, was solitary. Once more he was compelled to ask himself why he was thus placed. From his inward consciousness came the reply that he had so chosen and that his egotism and false views of life were in the main responsible.

One of the clerks at the desk greeted him respectfully as became a clerk in the presence of a patron who rents one of the most expensive suites. The hall-boy touched his forehead; so did the elevator man, but to Henry's jaundiced eyes it seemed that behind these obeisances there was a covert sneer. He instinctively felt that devoirs were being made to his money and not to himself, and again came the mutinous questioning why this should be.

Widgit was awaiting him, cool and

respectful as usual. Henry eyed him enviously as one who has found his vocation and uses it accordingly. He submitted to the administrations of his servitor uncomplainingly, and then requesting that no one should disturb him, locked himself in his den and began to think.

At seven o'clock Widgit tapped softly and wanted to know if Mr. Blinny would dine. Mr. Blinny replied that he would not, and did not unlock the door. At ten o'clock Mr. Blinny slid back the bolt and rang the table bell sharply. Widgit entered, and, to his veiled surprise, was asked to sit down and have a cigar. In the presence of a resolution a man's true character is apt to make itself manifest, and so it was in this case. Widgit saw quickly that a change had come over his master.

"Widgit," said Mr. Blinny after a pause, "you have, I understand, been in the service of three genuine gents?"

"Yes, sir," said Widgit respectfully, without a tremor of the minutest muscle of his countenance.

"Then, Widgit, you must know what a gent is from tap root to top shoot." Henry still remembered the florist business.

"Yes, sir," said Widgit even more respectfully.

"Well, Widgit," said Henry after a pause, during which he bit three times in an uneasy fashion at a fifty-cent cigar, "what is the difference between one of these same gents—and—and—me?"

For once in his life Widgit permitted the faintest flash of surprise to pass over his features. It disappeared instantly, however, as he said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I never allow myself to discuss my employers even to myself, sir."

"I know that—I know that," cried Henry; "but all the same I want you to answer; I do. Look here, whatever you say you won't be the loser by it. I ask you to answer not as a valet, but as a"—it was a hard thing for poor Henry to say, but he felt he had to say it—"but as a friend. You

know and I know that I ain't a gent born; and you know better than any man I know why anyone who ain't a gent born can't become like one who is born that way. So answer."

"Mr. Blinny, sir," said Widgit, "I can only repeat that I know my place, and it isn't my place, sir, to say things about my employer, sir."

"Not unless your employer is willing and anxious for you to do so, Widgit," persisted Henry. "As I said before, I shake the employer end of it and ask you as a friend. Don't forget that you will not be the loser by being honest with me."

Widgit looked at Mr. Blinny steadily for a few moments, studied the pattern of the carpet, examined the cornice of the ceiling, eyed the ash of his cigar, and at length said:

"Well, sir, if you will pardon me, sir, the ancestors of my last master, Lord Chilcunstyle, came to England with William the Conqueror. Before they came they were gentlemen born and bred—so I have it—as gentlemen were understood in those days—somewhere in the North of France. The whole family did nothing else but fight and raise ladies and gentlemen. So there you are, sir."

"Meaning what?" asked Henry.

"Meaning, sir, that people who for nine hundred or one thousand years, sir, have devoted themselves to producing ladies and gentlemen must be ladies and gentlemen of a fine breed—regular tip-toppers, sir—fine in form, you know, fine in talk, fine in their ways. It comes as natural for them to be so as it comes to us—I beg your pardon, sir—as it comes for me to breathe."

"And who was your master before Lord Chilcunstyle?" asked Henry.

"Sir Henry Lactonshire. They do say, sir, that his forefathers were Saxon kings in Somerset; but be that as it may, he was certainly of the finest of fine strains. He could no more help being a gentleman than a sparrow could help chirping. 'What is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh,' sir, as you know, and Sir Henry

and his people were ladies and gentlemen born and bred to the marrow."

Widgit paused, and Henry remained silent. The nearby whistle of an Elevated train rang sharply through the quiet of the select hotel, and the muffled ring of the elevator bell punctuated the pause in the conversation.

"And you have been with other high-toned families, also?" asked Henry.

"Yes, sir."

"Have you ever been in the service of a master who wasn't a gent born and bred?"

"No, sir; except your——"

"I know what you mean," said Henry wearily.

"I'm not saying, sir," said Widgit, exceedingly respectfully, "that you are not a gentleman."

"But you know I am not for all that, Widgit. And I'll only think the more of you for being outspoken. Now, be honest with me, some more—do you think a man—a man just like me—can be made into a gentleman if he's got money and is willing to learn?"

"Mr. Blinny," replied Widgit, "you will excuse me, sir, if I say that it is not a fair question to ask a person who is in your employ."

"As I said before," replied Henry with much earnestness, "I am not asking you as your boss, but I am asking you as man to man. Answer me and you won't regret it."

"If that is so, Mr. Blinny," said Widgit, rising, "I will tell you the truth. You may as well expect a brewery horse to turn into a racer by giving him oats to eat and the training of a race-horse, as to expect a man who isn't a gentleman to turn into one by giving him a gentleman's clothes and feeding him on gentleman's food. I like you, Mr. Blinny, and I think that you are as much of a gentleman as one can be who wasn't born a gentleman, but——"

"I am not a gentleman for all that?" suggested Henry.

Widgit was silent.

"I say again," continued Henry, "that you won't lose by what you have told me tonight. I wish to ask you

something else. If you were me with lots of money—and—and—being as I am, what would you do?"

"The question is a hard one to answer, sir," replied the valet, "but I think I'd give the gentleman business the chuck, come right down to what I was fitted for, and enjoy myself in the way that I felt like, without making myself uncomfortable all the time by trying to be what I never could be. I would go into some nice business; something I would not have to be a slave to, something that would keep me busy and out of which I could get some fun. I understand, sir, you were in the florist business. It would be a lark to buy out that same business and put your old boss in as manager. I'd do heaps of things if I had your money, sir, and the good heart I know you have. I'd sack those tailors of yours——"

"And the spats, Widgit?" asked Henry, with a smile.

"And the spats, too, sir. And I think I'd get a rough suit and a pair of heavy shoes and go on a tramp for a couple of weeks."

"Take another cigar, Widgit," said Henry suddenly. "Are you—that is—have you a girl?"

Probably for the first and last time in his professional career Widgit blushed.

"I have, sir."

"And you intend to marry her?"

"Yes, sir, when circumstances permit."

Henry lit a third cigar, meditated and walked over to his desk. Then he produced a cheque-book.

"Widgit," he said, "I am going to dismiss you and give you a year's salary, and if you care to become manager of a florist shop and marry that girl of yours, let me know. Find Barwag's number in the telephone book. I'll call him up in the morning and have a talk with him."

Widgit took the cheque and his dismissal. "But manage a florist shop, sir!" he replied. "Never, never! I beg your pardon, Mr. Blinny, but I could never hold such a billet. Dear me, dear me. Such a come-down—for me!"

A HELPMATE

"MY dear," said Mr. Hardriven, suddenly looking up from the letter he was dashing off that evening, "I wish you'd call up Jack Tyndall on the 'phone for me, and ask him if he's still willing to let that stock I was talking to him about go for the price he mentioned. I must know tonight, and I couldn't catch him in his office today."

"Certainly, Jimmy dearest," replied Mrs. Hardriven, springing up with that alacrity she makes it a point to display whenever her husband asks her help. "What's their number?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Hardriven, frantically pushing his pen again. "You'll have to look it up in the book."

"All right," assented Mrs. Hardriven, looking around the library uncertainly. "Um-m-m, now where on earth is it? Dear me, I wonder if it's the book baby was tearing to shreds this morning. Oh, Jim, you ought to have seen him; he was too cunning for anything. He was just the most rapturous little mischief——"

"Please hurry, dear," interrupted Mr. Hardriven. "Tyndall may be going out some place; I think I heard something of the kind, and I must catch him first. You can tell me all about baby afterward."

"Or did I lend it to Mrs. Nextor?" murmured Mrs. Hardriven, searching aimlessly here and there. "I know she told me their girl used theirs to start a fire with."

"Do please hurry," urged Mr. Hardriven, a little sharply. "I wouldn't miss him for a farm."

"Why, here it is behind the 'phone, where it should be!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardriven gleefully. "Now how do you suppose that ever happened? Well, let's see. Tyndall? T-t-t-t. Oh, why, the Tituses have put one in, and I needn't have gone all the way up there yesterday to find out what she puts in her gingerbread to make it so good. Isn't that just too bad?"

"Can't you hurry?" demanded Mr. Hardriven insistently.

"Yes, of course," replied Mrs. Hardriven indignantly. "T-t-Titus—I had that before—t-t-t—Tompkins. By the way, Jim, did I tell you the Tompkinses are going to Europe in a couple of months?" asked Mrs. Hardriven, forgetting her pique. "I don't for the life of me see how they can afford——"

"Here, let me find it for you," suggested Mr. Hardriven, reaching out for the book impatiently.

"Oh, I'll have it in a minute," returned Mrs. Hardriven, tossing her head. "Ta-ta-te-t-t-Thompson—I wonder if Molly Thompson's suited with her new cook—ti-ti-Titus—why, I looked all these over before—t-t-t-Trimmer. How do you suppose that little Mrs. Trimmer ever manages to do all her work herself with all those children, and only a half-grown girl to help, and keep them and herself always looking so neat? It's perfectly incomprehensible how some——"

"Gimme that book!" commanded Mr. Hardriven imperatively.

"Just a second, Jim," replied Mrs. Hardriven placidly, "and I'll have it. Do the Tyndalls spell their name with an i or a y? You know you never can tell with names like that how people——"

"Great Scott, will you give me that book?" cried Mr. Hardriven frantically.

"Why, of course, Jim, since you want to do it yourself," said Mrs. Hardriven, handing it over with an aggrieved air, "but I thought you said you'd like me to attend to it for you because you were in a hurry to know."

ALEX. RICKETTS.

SERIOUS MEN AND HONEST WOMEN

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

FRENCH actresses and French maids insist that, when in Anglo-Saxon countries, they are treated with levity—sometimes with insult—because of the traditional plea that Gallic virtue is apocryphal. They run weeping to their friends and expatiate on the cruelty of this supposition.

It is certain that if we accept the average French novel or drama as a veracious picture of manners—I use the word in its wider sense—we cannot be surprised at the very loose and false ideas current on French morality. The women, fascinating and facile, the men, frivolous and corrupt, seem to live, move and have their being only for purposes of self-abasement. Even the “honor” which the Parisian makes such a fuss about stops at no such trivial crime as opening other people’s letters, listening at doors, needless lying, while seducing one’s neighbor’s wife appears to be their habitual pastime. Nor does the Frenchman—like the well-bred American who has indulged in such amusements—immediately take his lady by the hand and marry her, when a convenient husband has made it possible. Oh, no! With the author’s perfect approval he forsakes her, dumps her on a harsh world, and, returning to virtue, marries, as his reward, *l’Américaine*, who is eighteen, exquisitely beautiful, enormously rich and madly in love with him. Angelo, lately revived in Paris by the inexhaustible Sarah, is an object-lesson of what women once bore. One smiles at fancying an up-to-date woman play-

fully invited by her master to drink poison for having flirted mildly, while he complacently keeps his mistresses.

We live in the reaction of such conditions. It makes for the understanding of divorce. The priest, who bids the woman forgive everything—being himself a man—is more difficult to fathom. Religious traditions still keep Parisian novelists very old-fashioned as to the proper distribution of punishment. Culprits are judged, not according to their error, but to their sex.

But this is a digression. I wish here to speak of two types which are far from infrequent in France—beautiful, picturesque France, the loveliest country of the world and the least appreciated. These types, culled from the class of its inhabitants which constitutes its strength, we will call *l’homme sérieux* and *l’honnête femme*.

It seems to me inconceivable that a human being could reach higher sublimities of conduct than the French “serious man.” Lately I have studied him individually and at close quarters. The particular *homme sérieux* I have in my mind, and have held under accurate inspection, is the only son of two dirty old peasants, who live with their goats and rabbits in a miserable mountain hut. His birth and early environment, therefore, offered no crutch. His mother is absolutely ignorant, his father an incurable drunkard. From this dunghill Amédée has gradually evolved. He lives in the provincial town near to his village and holds there a trusted position in its principal bank.

Very early every morning he gets up, lights the fire and heats coffee and milk for his household. He has a pretty, blonde, spirited young wife and two babies. He carries this early meal to them himself. He sweeps out and opens the store, over which his wife presides; then he dresses with scrupulous neatness and starts for the bank. At twelve o'clock he returns to breakfast with his wife and children, spending this hour in giving a helping hand where needed. He returns to his desk in town and appears no more until dusk. His evening is invariably spent with his family—Madame's parents—his sisters. He indulges in one cigarette. With his dinner he drinks water, reddened with the country's wine. This is the extent of his dissipation. Sometimes a friend drops in and, sitting in the doorway of the shop, they discuss politics, airing the almost general dissatisfaction with present conditions. For the better class of artisan and the small bourgeois are as offended by the Government's present stupidity in matters of religion as is the most imperious duchess of the ancient regime. They fear Brisson will succeed Loubet, knowing that *la rage de manger du curé* is his obsession. "Where," they say, "is the vaunted liberty which does not allow us parents to send our offspring to such schools as we think fit?" They deplore the reducing of the wine tax, which has engendered an alarming increase of drunkenness, and sometimes they inquired of me how such things are managed in the United States.

On one evening Amédée took his wife and sisters to a ball. He danced twice with his wife and once with his sisters. Nothing could be more pathetically decent than his spare figure, clad in its well-brushed evening frock-coat. What is there in the cut of his black trousers which inspires respect, which is almost majestic? Certainly the very flutter of his flying cloak in the wind, as he toils back and forth from his daily treadmill, is full of strange dignity. He is good-looking, with dark, intelligent, melancholy eyes, and a pale interest about his face.

But he does not dally to smile at the fresh, rosy, indolent maiden, or dawdle at street corners with bewitching, vivacious matrons. Of his wife—whom he adores and spoils—he says she has a temper which has taught him wisdom. He never contradicts her, and he leads her gently without her own knowledge.

Amédée never speaks a loud or unseemly word, never spits or hawks, though he blows his nose a little hard, as do all Latins. He has perfect manners. They are the manners of the most democratic of nations; admirable in courtesy, yet devoid of that cringing which supremely disgusts one in England. There are persons who like to have their boots licked. The attitude of the licker does not exist in France. It never did, even in monarchical days.

With his young sons Amédée is affectionate, but strict. He means that they shall keep straight. He helps to support his parents. All of his money is spent upon his family—not one spare cent on folly or personal pleasure. He has never seen Paris and probably never will. And he is the type of hundreds of other men of his race, who, if not brilliant, are powerful breadwinners, levers, balance wheels, in the rush of modern fortune. So we may put down the descriptions of wholesale depravity, to which the romancers treat us, to the absinthe-steeped pipe-dreams of profligate carousers, and conclude with satisfaction that the French are not all degenerates.

As a pendant to *l'homme sérieux*, France presents to us *l'honnête femme*.

In America we take it for granted that all women are "honest." Even when we have quite lamentable exposition to the contrary, we grant the doubt's benefit. To her daughter France is less generous. A woman, to keep her reputation intact, must be a flower of virtue, without a flaw. No tampering, no looking backward. Her behavior must be prudent, her thought virginal. For impurity is here given its worst definition, and indiscretion is not condoned.

As I have studied *l'homme sérieux*, so I have studied *l'honnête femme* in my very abode. She is a handsome woman of forty-five, stands squarely on her feet, is well set up. Her husband drinks. When tipsy he is unkind and unreasonably jealous—jealous of the titbit she saves from her own dinner for their invalid son—jealous of her affection for this child.

She is the landlady of an apartment house, cooks for the guests—if they like—and with what art and skill! She is also janitress, sees to the rooms and helps half the day and much of the night in her husband's restaurant. This woman's drudgery never ceases. She is always neat, always in black, with a clean apron, her curly dark hair carefully arranged. She rarely goes out, has no relaxations. One never sees a frown of discontent on her fine forehead—such as one often sees on the foreheads of fashionable New York women who live for pleasure. No complaint ever passes her lips. Early and late she works, almost from morning until morning. Sometimes, when her husband is sober, she sings. He was once told that she had driven a mile with another man, and was brutal to her in consequence. He is supposed to love her—an excuse for his Othello-like propensities. "As if," she exclaimed to me, "I could be guilty of such an indelicacy!" Which made me laugh.

It was a cry of the heart. She is, in fact, delicate, and she is lovable. She has no hopes except for her children, two of whom are safely placed. She has no personal ambitions or vanities. Age will come—then death—the end—the earned repose. This woman's soul seems clear as crystal, exquisite and strong. She, too, is a type. I am told there are many such.

A more robust one, equally commendable, is Madame M——. She was scrubbing for me, and I asked her, casually, if her marriage was a happy one. She looked up with a lovely smile.

"My man and I," she replied, "never had but one quarrel. One of his

friends persuaded him he was led by me; he came home and gave me a drubbing. He is smaller than I am. I rolled up my sleeves and trounced him soundly. We have been quite happy ever since. It taught him a lesson. We have eight children. We are very poor. He makes little—there is nothing doing here in winter. My ninth child died. I cried for six months. She was so *mignonne*."

All this is very interesting to observe. I should advise the more important French writers, when they depict *l'homme sérieux* and *l'honnête femme*, to be very simple, to be satisfied with photographs, and not to draw on their artistic imaginations.

Albert Darras, in Paul Bourget's "Un Divorce," is a fine portrait. Gabrielle is tiresome. Virtuous Frenchwomen in books are always tiresome—sometimes in life. I did not find my landlady or Madame M—— tiresome. They were enormously alive.

I once wrote to a puissant contributor to the *Vie Parisienne*—that genius who writes under the name of Gobbo—and asked him why he did not paint at least one lady who was blameless and fascinating. He answered that he could not, as she did not exist.

Perhaps the hypocrisies of aristocratic circles make for these opinions. In the lower walks of life in France I have not found the chaste women necessarily effaced or colorless. We in America have a *juste milieu*. There is the man who amuses himself a little, seeks recreation and yet is none the worse for it. We have thousands of honest women who are restless and discontented enough to be occupying, are frightful coquettes, waste money, wear tumultuous clothes, desire to be made love to, yet are not necessarily wicked. They are often attractive. They keep their men in order. Perhaps the hotter Latins cannot play with fire; when they do they get burned. Our calmer temper permits of such amiable diversions.

There is no doubt that the up-to-date American woman demands and gets a freedom unheard of in Europe.

Whether this be for her weal or woe is matter for conjecture. We may unjustly disfranchise the negro, and we shall pay for it in the end. A once accorded liberty is a danger tampered with. We can cow a negro for a season. It will be difficult to cow a modern woman.

These "white slaves" the newspapers have been gushing over are an astonishment to us. Why, in the name of common sense, do they submit? No woman need live a life of dishonor. The country is full of modest, decent homes which need

service—which these women, who prefer vice, are too indolent to perform. They choose the kicks and curses of their so-called "lovers." We pity this type of woman, but she remains a mystery. She is too unintelligent for this side of the water. Her tragedy is heart-breaking, but senseless. Even the over-emancipated woman is saner.

However this may be, in no community have I met persons so rarely wholesome, excellently sound and worthy of all emulation as those which France can breed—*l'homme sérieux* and *l'honnête femme*.



ROSE OF A DAY

THE rose was gathered in morning bloom—
 Dawn had stooped to its lips of dew—
 Fainting with crimson clouds in the west
 It died in its fragrance, love, for you!

The day was born in an eastern sky—
 Noonday burned in its heart of gold—
 It lived until starlight, brave and gay;
 The story of rose and day is told.

But somewhere over the moving years,
 All unwithered by sun or age,
 The day is writ in a book of light,
 The rose lies ever across the page!

MARTHA GILBERT DICKINSON BIANCHI.



PROOF POSITIVE

JACK—I feel as if I hadn't a friend in the world!

BOB—Cheer up, old chap! I'll borrow ten dollars of you, just to prove that you have!

THE COUNTESS DORÉE

By Rose K. Weekes

SNOW was falling. It had been falling since dawn.

Between great walls of white-veined granite the narrow pass lay, a smooth lane of drifted snow, seamed by the gray thread of a stream that ran brawling down the ravine. The cliffs were cleft by fissures, down which rushed the torrents to join the main stream.

At the issue of one of these stood a little black figure, the only living thing in that wilderness of white and gray. Muffled in a cloak, there she waited, shading her eyes from the glare as she looked down the pass; but the messenger she looked for did not come, and at last, with a sigh, she turned to go home.

Her first step took her splashing into the torrent that foamed down the fissure, and she continued to climb up its course, sometimes on the boulders and sometimes in the water. Once when a stone gave way and upset her in the snow she stopped to efface the marks of her fall with anxious care.

Midway up the gully she came to a thick growth of brambles. She lifted the bushes and crawled underneath to a cave, so hidden that not the keenest eyes could have seen the opening from without. Ten feet from the entrance a curtain hung across the passage. Beyond this she came into a half-lit, rock-walled chamber, handsomely furnished with a table, a stool and a bed. Upon this bed lay a man asleep, blanched by the darkness and worn by sickness. The man was Florian von Etelmar, rebel, and the girl was his wife, Dorée.

There they had been hiding for two whole months, since the failure of Hofer's gallant effort to save Tyrol

from her enemies. The mountains were overrun by the merciless Charolles's merciless soldiery, looking for rebels. Hofer himself, Hasbinger the Capuchin, and many another had been taken, yet these two had thus far escaped, saved by the fidelity of a servant, who told them of the cave and brought them food. It was for Siebel that Dorée had been watching. He had not been to them for a week, and after this day she would have neither food nor medicine left.

She dropped her wraps inside the cave, and kicked off the enormous military boots that Siebel had provided for the crossing of the stream. Dorée was a slim little person, gray-eyed, with a long plait of hair that glistened like silver. Once upon a time Dorothea von Etelmar's hair had been so purely golden that it had won her the pet name of Dorée; now it was perfectly white. Stooping over her husband to tuck him up with a motherly air, she caught her ring in the blanket, which tore like tissue paper. Straightway Dorée went off into a soft ripple of laughter. Low though it was, it roused the sleeper, who put out his hand with an appealing "Dorée?"

"Baby," said Dorée, "what do you mean by waking up?"

"You look tired, sweetheart," said Florian, watching her wistfully.

"Quite worn out," said Dorée, conveying a spoon to his lips. "This is the very best soup made from horse, so you'll please drink it at once. Are you cold?"

"Not while I have you."

"But then I cannot sit here on your bed all day." ("Though I would ask for no greater delight," said Dorée's eyes.)

"I shall start the fire again; I don't and won't believe that anyone can see the smoke in this room, and in any case I think I'd prefer being shot to being frozen alive."

She built up a fire of logs and stood watching it burn.

"Dorée, when do you sleep?" asked Florian suddenly.

"Oh, at odd times—when I want to, baby." She wheeled round on him. "Now, Florian, do I look ill? A compliment, if you please, you coiner of pretty phrases!"

"Ah, Princess Silverhair," said Florian, "the words I would use are all too shy to come and speak to you!"

They had been married only six months; therefore they contrived to be happy in the most adverse circumstances. Yet when Florian was asleep again and Dorée had come back from one last wistful look for Siebel, trouble sat heavily upon her brow. There was no help for it; she must go to Emmeringen herself. Twelve miles, there and back, and Florian might wake and miss her. Dorée knelt at the table and wrote a little note, traced with love and sealed with kisses, which perhaps atoned for its divergence from the truth. It ran:

Dearest, don't be frightened if you find yourself alone. Siebel and I are forced to go out. There is no time to explain, but I will tell you about it when I come back. All is well with us. I am kissing this letter that you may have something to remember me by.

YOUR LITTLE DOREE.

For her journey she rummaged in a dark corner for a black garment, which was nothing less than a priest's soutane. Hasbinger had left it there before he was taken. Certainly it was rather large for her; but Dorée got herself into it by the aid of a needle and thread, and so started, her peasant's dress hidden under the black folds, her hair coiled safely under the broad-brimmed hat.

Down the gully and across the pass and up a track on the farther side Dorée made her way, looking out as she went, for she had heard that a fresh detachment had just been sent to Emmer-

ingen for the sole purpose of finding von Etelmar and his wife. She was especially anxious to avoid General de Charolles himself, who would certainly know her; for he was her own cousin, and had even been a suitor of hers before she met her husband. But she saw no one.

Her errand in the village was soon done, yet it was dark before she turned homeward. The snow had ceased and the stars lighted her path. Dorée, intent on Florian, ran most of the way. She reached the pass. It grew darker as she descended, but Dorée ran on recklessly, gathering speed as she went. She ended in a breathless scramble, and came full tilt into a man standing sentinel at the bottom of the ravine.

Dorée's sudden onset almost knocked him down.

"*Gott in Himmel!*" he gasped, and struck a light to survey his assailant. The flame which revealed a pale and scared Dorée showed her that he wore the French uniform.

"You run fast, Herr Pastor!"

"An errand that will not wait, my son," said Dorée, with all imaginable dignity.

"It'll have to wait while you come with me to the corporal. All honest folk should be in their beds at this hour."

"Yet it appears that you are out of yours."

"True enough!" said the trooper, with a hearty great laugh. "But I'm in the way of business. I'm sorry for it, *mein Herr*, if you're in a hurry, but you must come with me."

"It is a sin to detain me."

"But if I don't there will be an end of all things, mortal or immortal, for Private Acker. The corporal won't keep you long. His bark's worse than his bite," he wound up consolingly.

Dorée cautiously held up her soutane in front, and picked her steps beside him in the snow. A turn in the rocks brought them within sight of a camp, spreading directly across the pass, with white tents and flaming wood fires brightening the night. Dorée was ready to swear that no one

had been there in the afternoon when she went by. Round the fires sat men and women talking, laughing, drinking. Discipline was lax and wine was cheap, and they had no more dangerous task before them than the hunting of fugitive rebels. The nearest group hailed Acker.

"Hullo, Acker! Whom have you there?"

"A prisoner. Where's the corporal?"

"Gone to his tent. Karl, go and fetch the corporal. Tell him Acker's got a friend to help him to paradise!"

Karl, a graceless urchin of thirteen, was hauled out and went off grumbling, and the others closed round Dorée and chaffed her. She answered back with spirit, but was relieved at the appearance of authority in the person of Corporal Rousseau, a short, thick-set, elderly man, with fierce mustaches and keen black eyes which made Dorée uncomfortably conscious of her petticoats.

"What's your name, you?"

"I am Father Clement of Emmeringen."

"Any of you know Emmeringen? No? That's a pity. Proceed, then. What are you doing out at this hour?"

"I am on my way to baptize an infant who lies grievously sick. To hinder me will be a sin——"

"Pass the sin; we've got nothing to do with that. You must be a good priest to come out on a night like this."

"I trust I am an obedient son of Holy Mother Church," said Dorée piously.

"Obedient sons of Holy Mother Church have no business with brandy bottles," said Rousseau, appropriating Dorée's oil. He was about to uncork it when Dorée cried out in alarm, which passed as indignation:

"The bottle contains holy water for the sacrament of baptism! It is a sacrilege to touch it!"

"Water of life, perhaps." He tilted the bottle, but luckily nothing came out. "Frozen, I suppose. Well, I don't know about you. How can I be sure you're telling the truth? You mayn't be a priest at all."

Dorée was sure she did not know either, so she held her peace with an

air of injured innocence. From behind came a smothered laugh.

"Let him marry Autrey to his Lisette!"

"What's that? You, Charliou! What did you say?"

"Nothing, corporal." Charliou's tone was sulky. "Only, Autrey's been worried out of his life because he didn't take his wife to church—lucky she to get married at all, I say. That's all I said. Let him marry them now!"

Rousseau hesitated; his eyes twinkled.

"Tell Autrey to bring his wife along!"

Here was a predicament. Vainly Dorée protested, vainly declared the hour uncanonical. But Rousseau's mind was fixed, and he gave her the choice between this and detention till the morning, which, of course, meant exposure. After all, it seemed that no harm would be done, since Madame Autrey was already securely married. Dorée began to recall her own wedding, and to gather up the Latin she had learned in her girlhood. The happy pair arrived, the bridegroom awkward, the bride shy. Dorée placed them to her liking, and was about to begin when Karl's shrill voice piped out:

"Isn't the Herr Pastor going to take off his hat?"

"No, little son, he is not; and if you suffered from toothache as badly as I do you would keep your mouth shut and be thought wiser!"

"But—let me go, Acker, you Tyrolese brute!" For Acker had tipped Karl into a snowdrift. Dorée breathed freely again, and launched forth into the ceremony.

Her nervousness wore off, and soon she was entering into her part with spirit; nothing could have been more apt than the homily she read Lisette upon her wifely duty. They knelt to receive her benediction, and Dorée, recalling her own marriage, gave to the sonorous Latin words a sweetness and solemnity that held them on their knees. And at that moment Karl came slyly up behind and tipped her

hat off. Dorée's betraying plaits were revealed.

Rousseau clutched her by the elbow. "*Sacré nom!*" he uttered. "It's a woman!"

The bridegroom scrambled to his feet, dragging his wife up with him. The others all crowded round Dorée, questioning, laughing, shouting. Someone suggested the removal of his holiness's soutane, and the proposal was at once acted upon. Dorée soon stood in their midst in her peasant's dress. She clasped her hands and lifted her eyes to Rousseau's face.

"Please, please let me go!"

"Who are you? What are you dressed up for?"

"I went to Emmeringen to get my father's medicine, and I was afraid to pass the camp. So I dressed up in our pastor's clothes. Oh, monsieur, please do not hurt me! Indeed, indeed, I meant no harm!"

She looked so young and pretty and frightened that Rousseau's severity melted a little.

"Let her go, Herr Corporal," said Acker. "After all, it's only a girl!"

"Pretty fool I look, married by a girl!" grumbled Autrey.

"You only look what you are, then!" retorted Acker.

Dorée looked at the offended bridegroom. "I am very sorry," she said. "I did not mean to make you uncomfortable." Her voice quivered. "Please let me go. My father is so ill, and I—I love him!"

Two big tears ran down her cheeks. The tender-hearted Acker swore floridly. Rousseau was hesitating on the verge of mercy, when the scene was interrupted.

"What's all this noise about? Rousseau, you're fit for nothing but to teach in a *pensionnat* for *demoiselles*! I will not have it!"

"Run, before he sees you!" whispered Acker. Dorée attempted to do so, but it was too late. The officer saw her.

"Stop that girl, Acker! Who is she?"

Rousseau did not reply, but Charlieu said suddenly, "A prisoner."

"And you meant to let her go with-

out reporting the case to me? You'll hear of this again, my friend. Where did you find her?"

Again it was Charlieu who supplied the information.

"Masqueraded as a priest, did she? Let's have a look at her." The officer picked up a flaming brand and held it close to Dorée's face. She turned her head away. De Vigny calmly turned it back again, handling her with a freedom that made her cheeks burn. Involuntarily her hand went to her pistol. De Vigny's followed hers. He pulled the weapon out of her dress, and threw it in the snow.

"Peaceable peasants don't carry pistols of that pattern," he remarked. "Nor do young girls have white hair. What a little liar it is! Bring me that bottle."

He smashed it on a stone, and dipped his finger in the half-solidified oil. "You meant that for a wounded man," he said, fixing his eyes on Dorée. "You meant it for one of these confounded rebels. Tell me where he's hiding and I'll let you go; but if you're obstinate I'll make you sorry you ever were born."

Dorée did not answer.

"You won't speak? Well, we must loosen your tongue. Let me see; for a priest Saint Andrew's cross would make a good beginning. Just find me two splinters of wood, one of you—pine splinters, to burn well."

It was one thing to laugh at Dorée, another to see her tortured; even Charlieu felt that. But no one could interfere.

"You will tell me where he is?" de Vigny repeated.

Dorée met his eyes unflinching. De Vigny lighted one of the splinters and laid it, flaming, slantwise across her palm. Dorée's hand lay passive in his. The fire ran along to the end and went out; the charred wood smoldered in red waves of heat.

"Now will you tell me?"

He waited for an answer before he lighted the second match, and laid it across the scar made by the fire.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" cried Lisette. She

broke away from her husband and disappeared.

"Do you really think you can make a Tyrolese tell you anything by torture?" Dorée asked proudly.

"You don't call this torture, do you? I'll teach you better by and bye!"

He laughed, watching her face. The second splinter burned out.

"The next thing, of course, is to dress the burn——"

"Yes, to dress the burn, Lieutenant de Vigny; but I will do that, thank you."

Whose voice was that, and who was this, before whom the soldiers scattered and de Vigny changed color? Dorée knew that thin, fair profile and the level, languid voice, and she trembled. Lisette, in fetching General Charolles, had done her no service.

"It's only a devil of a peasant girl, sir," said de Vigny. "I've been trying to make her speak, that's all!"

"Poor little devil of a peasant girl!" said Charolles. "You should treat a lady politely, de Vigny. Believe me, it pays."

"If I treated her politely, sir, I couldn't make her speak."

"Perhaps the reason is that you are not very well acquainted with the way to be polite," suggested Charolles, of whom it was said that his most offensive speeches were made in the most polished manner. He laid his hand gently on Dorée's shoulder. "Do me the favor of turning to the light, mademoiselle. Ah!"

"So, at last you have caught me, cousin!" said Dorée, smiling.

"So at last I have caught you!" Charolles repeated. "I am glad. Lieutenant de Vigny, you will consider yourself under arrest. I do not tolerate torture. Lieutenant Rousseau, you will hold yourself responsible for Lieutenant de Vigny's duties. This lady whom you have taken is the Gräfin von Etelmar. Now, cousin, will you be so good as to come with me?"

Rage was in de Vigny's heart, elation in Rousseau's, terror in Dorée's. Charolles knew how to make himself remembered. His was a terrible hand, ruthless, impartial; men loved him or

they hated him—there was no middle way.

Charolles had transformed into a luxurious domicile the shepherd's hut in which he had taken up his quarters. Curtains hid the walls, thick carpet covered the floor, a tinted lamp swung from the roof by golden chains and lit the room with its rose-colored glow. A fire blazed on the hearth, and a couch drawn up beside it, soft with embroidered rugs, invited repose. Dorée sank among the cushions with a sigh.

"Let me look at your hand, cousin?"

Dorée held it out. He bent his impassive face over it, and without a word lifted the curtains and went away into the room beyond. She watched him with a constrained feeling of fear. She had never known him well; his suit had been made formally, through her father, and as formally declined. At that time Charolles was a younger son in an impecunious regiment, and anything but an eligible match.

He came back with linen and dressings and bound up the palm with most delicate care.

"You are very good to me."

"Am I? Nothing for nothing is my motto."

"What do you want in return?"

"Your company at supper, to be sure."

"That I'll give with pleasure," said Dorée, laughing. "You should ask something more difficult than that."

"I am not grasping."

"You only ask to be allowed to feed your enemy!"

"My enemy?"

"How luxurious you have grown!" cried Dorée restlessly. "This place is like a lady's boudoir!"

"And you sitting there might be its mistress. It might have been so, if you remember. Well, shall we have supper?"

The villagers of Emmeringen could have told whence the general obtained his chickens and his cream, but the fruit came from sunny regions of the South, and the wine was of no acid German vintage. White napery, pol-

ished silver, sparkling glass and roses graced the repast. Dorée's meat had to be cut up before she could partake of it. Charolles performed this kind office, and did the honors of his table, while he talked in his languid way of men and matters. He had a bitter tongue, and was therefore very amusing. But the meal came to an end. The manservant removed all but the wine and the fruit, and left them alone. As the door closed Charolles broke off his talk in the middle of a story.

"And now," he said, "now, my cousin, we come to business."

"I am quite willing to come to it," said Dorée steadily. "I know I am your prisoner."

"Yes. And von Etelmar is hidden in the mountains near?"

Dorée kept silence.

"Thanks, my cousin; exactly so. But I knew it without your telling me."

He was standing over her with his elbow on the chimney-piece. Dorée had never seen a mask more enigmatical than that long, lean, pale face, with the straight upper lip and the square jaw. He was short and sparely built, by no means an imposing figure. Charolles had lived hard, it was said; certainly he had lived recklessly, courting peril with a hardihood that bespoke an iron nerve. What was he thinking as he stood there, silent? She could not guess.

"Are you fond of von Etelmar, little cousin?"

"I think I might say so."

"Pity, as he is to die."

"Oh!" Dorée leaned forward, her hands clasped, her face flushed, pleading, her eyes one prayer. "Let him go! You can, if you like! Do let him go, I love him so!"

"I can let him go, that is true. I could make out a passport for him, under the name of my brother, that would take him safely across the frontier and wherever he wishes to go. Yes; I could do that, or I could even get him a pardon."

Dorée did not urge her petition; she simply turned her eyes on him.

"And I will do it, on one condition."

"What?"

"That you come to me."

She did not speak.

"Don't misunderstand. Divorce is cheap and easy now that we've done with the Pope. I should want you as a wife."

"But I don't—" Dorée paused. "But why?"

"Don't you think I love you?" Charolles smiled. "Don't you think I'm mad with passion?"

Dorée considered the matter. "But I'm not rich," she said.

"Let us leave my motives dark, then. What do you think of the offer?"

"I will have nothing to do with it."

"Consider. You are counting that von Etelmar is still free and may never be taken. He is, as you admitted, in the mountains—"

"I never admitted it!"

"As you admitted, my cousin, in the mountains, where I suppose you have been nursing him. I know he was badly burned at the taking of Les Mayens. If you stay here, my prisoner, he will die of starvation—or I believe the wolves are out."

Dorée was silent.

"On the other hand, if you accept my offer, I pledge you my word that I will secure him a free pardon and the restoration of his estates. And if I fail I won't hold you to your bargain, that I promise. Which do you prefer?"

"I am thinking," said Dorée, raising her head, "of what my husband would prefer; and I know he would choose the wolves, starvation, anything but what you ask!"

"Would he, Dorée? *Anything?* You are alone—in my power."

Startled, Dorée looked up at him and sank back, saying no more.

Charolles strolled across to the window and lifted the curtain to look out into the night, lit by the cold glare of the snow. The black arch of the sky scintillated with diamonds. "*Che faro, Eurydice? Che faro, senza il mio ben?*" he whistled softly.

Dorée was still as despair. Once she

put her hand to her breast, where her pistol had lain. She encountered something that rustled, and drew it out. It was the packet containing Florian's sleeping draughts. A sudden thought came into her mind. She drew toward her the decanter of wine. Charolles was still looking out of the window.

In a little while he came back to her.

"Well, my cousin, which is it to be?"

"I will marry you."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor; if you get a pardon for Florian I will marry you."

A strange flash, flicker, lowering mist went over his face. He took her hands and kissed them; he transferred them both to one of his; he sank on the sofa beside her and slipped his arm round her waist and bent his lips to hers in one swift, silent progression. The kiss was long; his eyelids were drooped; he spoke in quick and even tones.

"Dorée, I have loved you very desperately. I saw you first when you were fifteen, and then I swore I would win you. You'll remember I made my offer two years later. Your father thought I was not eligible. 'Good!' said I; 'I'll make myself eligible.' And I went to work. Till then I had known nothing and done nothing; thenceforward I was in my saddle all day and studying military science three-fourths of the night. I succeeded. I came to the front. I said, 'I will go back and ask her again.' I went. You were to marry von Etelmar. I thought of having him assassinated; but I saw you together once, and I could not do it. After your marriage I did my best to get killed; I can't understand now how I came alive out of some of the scrapes I threw myself into. Next came news that von Etelmar had thrown in his lot with Hofer. I knew what would happen to Hofer, and I hoped again. When the rout began I watched for you; I tracked you down to Emmeringen; I intrigued to get sent here; I laid my plans to catch you. And you are here!"

"If you care for me," Dorée said, schooling her voice, "why do you break my heart?"

"Because I know you'll thank me for it yet."

"Never."

"Some day—yes, Dorée. When you are my wife."

"Never!"

"I think so. Mine is the stronger will."

"You delude yourself." Dorée shook off his arm. She spoke fearlessly, with hardihood and strong excitement. "I am not afraid of you; I may marry you, but in mind I'll still be free as air. I do not love you; I never shall."

Charolles was watching her very earnestly. A shadow fell on his face.

In a flash Dorée changed her tone. "Ah!" she cried, catching his hand, "release me from my bargain! Be noble; you could if you tried. Be generous. Remember, you are making me suffer now as *you* suffered. Be merciful!"

"Child, I can't! You don't suffer as I did; I hope I am exceptional in that."

"I beg you to be kind!" cried Dorée in an agony.

But he shook his head. "If I lost you now," he said, "I should shoot myself."

There was a long silence. "Let us drop the subject," resumed Charolles indolently. "I detest talking sentiment; in future we'll take it for granted. If you'll tell me where you have von Etelmar hidden I'll go up and see to him. He'll be anxious."

"I do not think he would be pleased to see you."

"My child, I should not tell him of your bargain." He drew over the dish of fruit. "Will you have a peach? You don't care for them? Try this wine, then; you look tired to death. I can recommend it; I ordered it for you."

He poured it out with a steady hand. And now Dorée trembled; she could not take her eyes from him. As he gave her the wine she said almost inaudibly, "I can't drink alone."

"By no means. You are going to drink with me. What a lovely night it is!" he went on, again lifting the

curtain. "I propose a toast. What do you say to *My wife?*"

Dorée set her glass down. "I can't drink that," she said, very pale.

"Can't you? Well, we'll have another, then. You won't object to *Your husband?*"

He held up the wine to let the light stream through it, crimson. "A trifle cloudy," he said. "And it does not taste pure, moreover. Perhaps the third glass—odd numbers are proverbially lucky—" He paused with the decanter tilted and glanced toward pale Dorée. "You don't like me to drink so much? You think the wine dangerously strong?"

"No doubt you know best," she breathed.

"I know the wine and my own constitution, yes. I don't fancy it will hurt me." He set down the empty glass and threw himself on the sofa by her side. "It's strong, certainly," he said after a pause. "My head's swimming."

Dorée watched him stealthily. For several minutes neither spoke. She broke silence to ask timorously, "Is it still snowing?"

"I—don't—think so. It wasn't—just now." Charolles stood up and essayed to go to the window. He stopped, putting his hand to his head. "Queer, this," he murmured. "Can't be only the wine—it hasn't affected you. Why, you've left yours!" He looked at her with sudden intensity. "What have you been giving me?—poison? You, Dorée? You?—poison me—you, child?"

He fell back unconscious on the sofa. Dorée had emptied into the wine the whole of Florian's sleeping powders.

Charolles's hand had fallen across her knee. She slipped away from it, shuddering, and hurriedly gathered up her property—the soutane, the boots, the wide hat. At the door she looked back. Charolles lay inert; he had drunk more than she designed, enough to kill him unless help came. He was her cousin and he loved her and she was sorry for him.

"I can't leave him so!" she cried half aloud.

Then came the thought of Florian, and Dorée wrung her hands. "Oh, I must, I must!" she cried; and running back she turned his face and kissed him several times, with warm remorse and tears.

Charolles sat up and clasped her in his arms. "My faith, you hate me well, Dorée!"

Then Dorée understood that he had been shamming, and all her strength went from her. Charolles laid her down among the cushions and stood up.

"I saw you put the powder in," he said. "Needless to say, I did not drink the wine; I emptied it out of the window. I thought I would make a little experiment; I wondered how far your hatred would carry you. I was not surprised that you let me drink the whole three glasses, but I own I did not think you would leave me to die, when it came to the point. I don't say you weren't justified—far from it; but I doubt whether our domestic life would be very satisfactory if you were cherishing such passions in your heart." He held out a paper. "There's von Etelmar's passport."

Dorée opened and read it and looked at him incredulously.

"Oh, yes, you can go. Go back to him. I sha'n't follow you. Another woman might have done it; but I never thought it of you. Don't poison von Etelmar when you get tired of him!"

"You know very well I would have died rather than do it," said Dorée quietly. "But I would do it again now, if need were. Florian is my husband. Good-bye."

She took the passport and went out into the night. Her conscience acquitted her. So, perhaps, did Charolles's, though to her he would not own it: generosity was a weakness he would not confess. He looked after her with a strange light in his eyes; then he got out his pistols.

"She came back to me to kiss me good-bye—my little love!" he said. "She could pity me after the way I had treated her— Well, she's worth dying for—Dorée!"

TWO LETTERS TO JACK

By George Herbert Clarke

I—MIDSUMMER

DEAR JACK: I am in love. Last week I blundered,
And rallied Tom McBride with *femme* and *frau*;
He passed by unresenting, and I wondered
To see the rogue so meek and pale—but now
I am in love.

I am in love: I've had a diagnosis;
The symptoms, Tom says, no one can mistake:
To think of Rose, to wish to be where Rose is,
To feel a grievous joy, a pleasant ache—
I *am* in love.

I am in love! Oh, yes, indeed, I'm in it:
I couldn't find the exit if I would.
Free thirty years, and then—all in a minute!
You ought to see her, Jack—still, what's the good?
I am *in* love.

I am in love, I tell you! As for markets,
They bore me with their never-ending prose.
I think I'll go and stroll about the park; it's
Remotely possible I'll meet with Rose!
I am IN LOVE!

II—MIDWINTER

DEAR JACK: I am in love again, I find—
That is, I never was in love before:
Last summer's Rose deceived me, but I'm blind
No more.

I do not like coquettes and flirts and such;
Besides, she kept an offering that I need—
That solitaire—I want it very much
Indeed.

Louise is not like that; she never riles
A chap, nor makes his temper go awry;
A docile little thing, but when she smiles—
Oh, my!

THE SMART SET

And when she speaks 'tis like the murmurous trees;
 She sings—the notes like elfin music sound!
 These two as yet are all the similes
 I've found.

She dresses most divinely in silk crème—
 I think it is—that shimmers up and down.
 (Rose, now, wore golf skirts, even when she came
 To town.)

She's little and she's slender and she's still,
 And yet her hand I hardly dare to squeeze:
 If e'er a chap was love-sick, *I am ill*,
 Louise!

Don't send me any of your silly wit
 Without an ounce of sympathy, or crumb
 Of comfort, for, old fellow, this is It!—
 Your chum.



ONE ON HIM—AND HER

MRS. BLEACHBLONDE—I found this black hair on your coat. What does it mean?

MR. BLEACHBLONDE—Why, that is my last winter's coat. Your hair was black then, you know.



HER GENTLE HINT

HE—Don't you think marriages are made in heaven?

SHE—Well, if all men were as slow as you they'd have to be.



DOCTOR—You need more exercise; try to get a political job.

PATIENT—Oh, there's no exercise in a political job.
 "No; but there's a whole lot in trying to get one."

SANTOKH DAS

By Herbert D. Ward

MY wife insisted on our taking the house. It had been built within a few years, and was unattractive. It was situated in one of those convenient suburban districts where one has to get used to the shrieking of trains and the squalling of cats, to the piano practice of your neighbor's children, and the gasps of the steam-shovel raucously building an unaccepted street. The low rental and the situation, so necessary to a struggling professional man, were the chief recommendations of the place. The house was supposed to be fully furnished, and from a pictorial point of view this was certainly true. The piano was in good condition, but the furniture had the air of having gone through a series of amatory campaigns, and the sofa was impossible. It was the pictures that reconciled me to living in the house at all. In the parlor, behind the piano, a grave Buddha looked down upon the new occupants with the serene air of one who has existed through all eternity untroubled by the petty mortal worries, of which we make so much and at which a Deity can only smile. Opposite, an exquisite water-color represented the amorous Krishna arising from a watery bed of lotuses with the air of one besieged by a cloud of houris. In a niche of the room that—we never knew why—was called the study an ancient Hindu idol had its seat in the corner. This rare specimen of lacquer work—probably over four hundred years old—whose gilt veneer had been covered by generations of sandal smoke until it shone like burnished bronze, seemed to mock our bleak New Eng-

land atmosphere. Where were the rich votive offerings? Where were the bowed heads? Where was the worship that had not left that gilded soul unsated? From this lacquered idol of another country and of an esoteric people there still emanated an indescribable odor of incense; this had the strange power to soothe the most perturbed feelings.

Insidiously the house that at first seemed impossible now began to fascinate. The elderly aunt of my sister-in-law—she who owned the property—had been infected by the Buddhistic doctrines that sweep over some of the populated sections of this country through the medium of sleek and insinuating Swamis; she had decorated the place through the advice of an Indian priest, who, it seems, had used her home as a caravansary.

We had not been in the house over six months when I hurried down to the dining-room one morning a little late. This room was the smallest and at the same time the most elaborate one in the house. It was barely ten feet square, and was only suitable for tête-à-tête meals. It had been decorated in white and gold, as all dining-rooms should be, and the white work had been brought to a high state of soft polish.

As I sat down to the table alone, ringing for my belated breakfast, I noticed on the white of the door a red blotch within the middle panel. I instantly arose to inspect this strange discoloration. By its breadth, and by the narrow, encircling lines that came to a centre in the lower part of the inscription, the mark must have been

that of a thumb. It was evident to the veriest tyro that the medium into which this thumb had been dipped before it touched the panel was that of blood. To the student of criminal history as exemplified in the Bertillon system of identification, this mark was a *carte de visite* almost as unmistakable as if the man, whoever he was, had left his name. Features may change, hair can be discolored, eyes can be made straight or crooked, but the mark of a thumb is the unchangeable witness to a man's personality.

We have only one maid, and I immediately satisfied myself that she had nothing to do with this intrusion. A lawyer, if he hopes to succeed, is always a man of prevision. I hurriedly made an accurate copy of the lines, and then washed the mark away. Before I did so I noted with some astonishment the color; this continued a brilliant arterial red, and had not faded into the dark maroon peculiar to desiccated blood. This circumstance attracted as it startled. I finally made up my mind that the mark could have come only from a burglar, and under no circumstances could I mention the fact to my wife, for most of the day she was alone in the house, and often far into the night. But the drawing I carefully filed away in a locked drawer in the desk adjacent to the inscrutable Buddha. In two weeks, as I had found no evidences of burglary, the incident had faded from my mind, as such incidents will, in a stress of work, and was almost forgotten.

One Sunday morning I was working in the study alone on an unfinished brief. Needing a reference, I took down a volume of the Massachusetts statutes and found the place. What should confront me between the pages of this book but a sheet of rice paper, and upon it the mark of a thumb! Instinctively I jumped up and locked the door, and sat down and stared at this strange missive. What is there in the delicate odor of sandalwood that so allures the senses? Is it hypnosis, or the unconscious influence of

ages of religious occultism that have chosen this wood as a medium to mystery? I glanced at the Buddha to see if he responded to the marvel before me. But the idol looked straight ahead, absorbed whether in the great or in the little, I know not, and from his triple pedestal of lotus leaves made no answer. But the Thing was before me—a carmine mark—the mark of a thumb. I compared the drawing of the original with this reappearance, and it was a replica. There were the same lines, the same grooves, the same centre, and the whole looked like the bloody imitation of an engulfing whirlpool. Then I must have fallen into some unnatural condition, for I found myself surrounded by hands threatening, horrible, encircling, from which there was no escape, and each bearing the mark of a bloody thumb. With a cry I came to myself, but the paper before me showed that the reality was as ominous as the hallucination. I took the paper and carried it to the kitchen stove and burned it up. I arrived at church in time for the benediction, and accompanied my wife home for the first time since the honeymoon; by this unusual marital attention she was as much pleased as she was disturbed. Why women are always asking for explanations I cannot conceive, and I like less the very intuition that prompts them to do so. For two weeks or more I was kept answering questions; but this time the incident was not forgotten.

At the time of which I write, I was absorbed in what promised to be a famous murder case. By some fortunate concatenation of circumstances I had been chosen by the prisoner to defend him. I was about the only person in the State who believed in his innocence, and for this confidence in the defendant I was unmercifully derided by some of the members of my profession. Naturally, at that time I was alert for mystery; for the case in which I was laboring proved as strange as it was complicated. Here was a man surrounded by enough circumstantial evidence to hang a dozen

men, and yet I knew him to be innocent. So it happened that the second appearance of this gruesome symbol did not tend to soothe a mind already keyed to excitement.

One afternoon I left the office early, and went to the club in order that I might marshal my mind with a few hours' contemplation in a quiet room. I was mapping out my plan of campaign, and as thoughts came surging upward I sat down to the desk to put them on paper. The club paper is blue, and is surmounted by a monogram calculated not to bring discredit upon any of its members. The first sheet in the rack was somewhat soiled. This I quickly stripped off, exposing the under sheet. To my utmost horror this was stamped by the bloody and too familiar mark. So perfect were the delineations of the cuticle of the thumb that it seemed as if this mysterious message, whatever it might mean, from whatever source it might have been sent, had been stamped by an engraver's die. That this was meant for me, and for me alone, I now had no doubt. That its appearance came outside of what is known as physical law I began to suspect.

A shudder of apprehension took possession of me—a man who had never felt foreboding before. Who was it that was calling me? What did the mysterious summons demand? Whither should I go? What should I do? Out of the dark came a blind command that left me plunged in a greater darkness than before. How long would it pursue me? And what must be the price of a relief which I knew must come some time, and which I felt must be paid in full? That night I went home late. My mind was confused about my public work because of this mysterious onslaught on my private life.

"My dear," said my wife, as I crept into bed endeavoring to assure her that the clock had not yet struck midnight, "you have something on your mind, and you are not yourself. I wish you would confide it to me. I

can bear anything but ignorance of what is troubling you. If a wife cannot be a partner to her husband, she has failed in her whole career. Won't you tell me? Won't you tell me?"

I bluffed lamely something about the difficulty of my case, and the fear that an innocent man might be executed, and turned to sleep. But we both lay awake far into the morning, each trying to make the other believe that rest had been had by the pretense of it.

My wife is a good wife, and she does the little things that make a man depend so much upon a woman, that, no matter whether he loves her or not, he cannot get along without her. For instance, she always puts out my clean shirts at night, ready for use in the morning. It is a little attention, but it shows a tender thoughtfulness that we men appreciate. I got up early, took my bath, and came back to our room. She was pretending to sleep, and on the sofa at the far end of the room my things were laid out ready for putting on. Upon the white bosom of that shirt a red blotch startled my eyes. There it stared at me like a crimson intaglio in a brilliant white setting.

"Great Scott!" I cried to myself, and looked furtively around. But her eyes were closed. That she was protected from this supernatural assault gave me a ray of comfort; even as the fact that I was hounded by what I knew not, frightened me as I had never been frightened before. What did that bloody mark portend? Was that thumb always going to press into my life until I went mad? At that moment I was in a mood to do anything to relieve myself from this obsession; that I was obsessed I had no doubt whatever. I took that shirt to the bathroom, scrubbed it fiercely, and tucked it into the bottom of the hamper. That there was no part of my life sacred from this mysterious intrusion I now fully realized, and I hurried back trembling for the next surprise.

Going in on the train I reviewed this

series of appearances that had followed me during the last six weeks, and somehow I felt that the matter, whatever it might portend, was coming to a rapid crisis. I had read in my youth books on the occult and had none of the materialistic skepticism which is so common among the scientists of our day. I knew something about the obsession of Wesley, and I had read with great care the two ponderous volumes of Meyer, and I had dipped casually into Eastern mysticism. I was therefore in a mood to view with a respect that did not decrease the fever of my mind these accelerating appearances. The question that now arose before me was this: Did I inherit with the occupancy of a house—as so many have done in the past—a supernatural legacy; or was this a personal complication which only I and no one else could disentangle? Whatever it might be, I kept saying to myself, "I'll do it! I'll do it! I'll do it!" For, to withstand the peremptory nature of this uncanny call now seemed as impossible as it was undesirable.

The morning mail is always carefully sorted and put on my desk by my stenographer—a young lady who is as efficient as she is unattractive. My desk this morning was covered with a flood of letters, most of which were from morbid people who were interested in this murder case. The last one of these was cut in a perfunctory way. It was addressed in a black, precise hand, but when I opened it I asked the stenographer to leave the room. It contained a sheet of rice paper from which there emanated that compelling aroma of sandalwood, which now could portend nothing but mystery to my excited senses. Its crest was the mark of the thumb. It read in stilted and unaccustomed English as follows:

Restore it to me,
and it was signed *Santokh Das*.

So this was the conclusion. The other had been the premise. It was an act of restoration, probably an act of justice that was demanded of me.

What are called spirits have been known to pursue men or a family until a great wrong has been righted. But whom had I wronged? What was I to restore? Whom was I to right? Hitherto my life had been blameless. Professionally I had protected the widow, and personally I had not wronged the fatherless. For over an hour I searched my past, and I could find therein no flaw that would be likely to warrant a supernatural interference. Could it be that I had been chosen to right another person's guilt, to equalize another man's wrong? As I thought, the picture of that unimpressionable Buddha—sitting upon its lotus bed in eternal calm, with an everlasting and exasperating immobility, pondering forever upon the mystic Om—swam before my mind.

"It is not I," I suddenly exclaimed as the inspiration flooded me; "it's the house. I will write to Miss Osborne."

Now Josephine Osborne was the elderly relative who had built the house and entertained Hindus therein, and I immediately penned her the following lines:

MY DEAR MISS OSBORNE:

Did you ever hear of a certain Santokh Das? If so, let me know immediately. It is very important. Write to the office, not to the house.

This I sent with a special delivery, and turned as well as I could to the routine of the day.

The case that I was engaged upon was an exceedingly complicated one, and interested the whole of the New England press. An aged man, who was lying sick in bed, had been very cleverly murdered. An instrument that must have been long and sharp, something like a hatpin, had been run into his brain from beneath the upper eyelid. The murderer had left no trace, and would not have been discovered had not the medical examiner insisted on there being a post-mortem examination of the brain. My client was the man's personal attendant and nurse, and there had been discovered in his possession, after the old man's

death, certain moneys of which he could give no satisfactory account. This led to a further investigation, and a silver-headed hatpin, such as any woman might lose, had been found in the curve of the pipe underneath the register of the attendant's room. The invalid's physician had been one of the leading specialists of the day, a professor in one of the medical schools, and one of the consulting surgeons of the largest hospital in the city. His fee of two thousand dollars for special service was not considered exorbitant, inasmuch as the patient died, and had been promptly paid to him by the executors of the murdered man's estate. But the web of evidence had closed about my client until he was completely enmeshed. There was no other person who could be suspected, either of the motive for, or of the crime itself. The physician was the last to see the patient alive the night before, and had left him soundly slumbering, presumably under the influence of one of those powerful opiates so commonly used in painful disorders. No one but myself believed my client innocent, and I was at my wits' ends, having made up my mind that when the trial came, about a month from the present date, I should do what I could, and throw him upon the mercy of the court. The nervous strain attending my first murder case was accentuated by this, my first supernatural experience. I would eagerly have devised a new method of diversion, had not my mind been sufficiently occupied with the solving of the two mysteries that confronted me.

It was with no slight degree of excitement that I awaited Miss Osborne's reply. This came late in the afternoon and read as follows:

MY DEAR NIECE'S BROTHER-IN-LAW:

Can we look upon you as a miraculous convert to the ineffable truths of Sakya Muni? If ever there was a saint on earth, Santokh Das was that one. For six weeks I entertained him in my house in that too wondrous spiritual communion which only kindred souls can appreciate. The great sorrow of my life came when I was informed by his friend, a pious Yogi, that he had passed beyond some six months ago. I only live

that I may some time be united with that wonderful soul in the supreme state of Nirvana.

Yours in the hope of Buddha,
JOSEPHINE OSBORNE.

As I read this ecstatic note over again, in the light of my own experience, I wondered whether there might not be more in this Eastern cult than we poor blind people dreamed of. Their belief is in an absorption after death, while ours claims a personal existence. But Santokh Das, although dead, was not wholly absorbed yet, and was alive enough to communicate with me—a man as far from his belief as the Occident is from the Orient. And the mystery was as great as ever.

That night when I arrived home I was impelled to go to my desk. I was not entranced, nor hypnotized; I was simply impelled, and the power that this dead fakir had over me caused me to shudder as I rolled the top back. I knew it was there, and it was with no surprise that I picked up the envelope lying face up, directed to me in the now familiar, unformed, stilted script. The sheet of rice paper had the same horrible seal upon it. It seemed redder, more vital, more imperious than ever, and I absorbed the words beneath:

Restore my thumb to me.

SANTOKH DAS.

So this was the crux of the whole matter. The man wanted his thumb. Of what use could a thumb be to a dead man? Nevertheless, I remembered having read somewhere in that memorable work on Eastern Sadhus, by John Campbell Oman, that although thousands of enthusiasts are willing to mutilate themselves almost beyond description, they are not willing to lose any member of their bodies. To transmigrate into another form without a hand or foot or even a thumb would be a calamity that their souls would not dare to face. The body comes into this world perfect, and must be rendered up at the last breath in a similar state of completeness. But how I could be expected to discover a lost thumb and return it to

an unknown corpse that had not even had the courtesy to leave me its address, was beyond my power of comprehension. Nevertheless, as the matter seemed to be urgent, and as considerable pressure was being brought upon me, I determined to do the best I could, and again indited a note to my wife's relative:

MY DEAR MISS OSBORNE:

I am perfectly willing to be a convert to any good thing, provided it has not too much mystery attached to it. Could you give me a little further information about your friend, Santokh Das? Did he have a thumb? Do you know whether, by an accident, it got lost in the shuffle? Somehow or other, his thumb bothers me. If I could have any information on this subject, I could meet you in Nirvana with greater peace of mind.

I had made up my mind after I sent this letter that if Josephine Osborne knew nothing about the thumb in question, I should drop the whole matter, and take whatever consequences might come. I could not believe that a good man could possibly suffer permanent harm from any such obsession as this, and this consideration raised my spirits as they had not been for weeks. Miss Osborne lost no time in replying. Her letter ran as follows:

DEAR BROTHER-IN-LAW TO MY NIECE:

You are certainly as mysterious as the pursuit of Yoga. Have you seen a vision or dreamed a dream? My good and gracious friend, Santokh Das, who, at his death, left a chasm in this world that can never be filled, was suddenly attacked by some terrible disease, and had to have his thumb removed by Dr. Savage, the eminent surgeon. It is not generally known, and this is in strict confidence between us, that Santokh Das carried with him a sacred cobra, with whom he was on intimate terms. But that this precious reptile could have inflicted a fatal wound upon its benefactor seems impossible of conception. I am personally of the opinion that the great austerities which this noble Swami practiced resulted in such a debilitating state of the blood that some kind of mysterious poisoning set in. If he had had his hand taken off, I am sure he would be living today. When he left me he weighed only two hundred and ten pounds, and was losing flesh rapidly.

If you were half as good as Santokh Das you would be a Buddhist, whether you recognized the fact or not.

Yours in the memory of this great Sayah,
JOSEPHINE OSBORNE.

That this mystery which had been enswaddling me was coming to a point I could not doubt. Santokh Das had lost his thumb. This thumb was different from any other thumb in the whole world, and in order that I might recognize it its impression had been presented too many times to have any doubt. This thumb had been cut off by a surgeon to save the patient's life from the effect of some malignant trouble. The operation evidently had been entirely successful from the surgical standpoint, but the patient had eventually died. To his spirit life the possession of that thumb was absolutely necessary, in order that his soul might rest in peace. I had been selected to assemble this lost part, and its acquisition seemed now only a matter of a few hours. I drew a long breath of relief after having contemplated this logic and telephoned to Dr. Savage, making an appointment with him at his office for the following morning.

"How happy you look!" said my wife as we sat down to dinner. "I haven't seen you look so care-free for weeks. Have you any new evidence? I am sure you will win your case."

If she had not been herself, I would have eagerly shared with her the knowledge that the shadow of a departed Yogi was about to be lifted from our happy home. As it is, I made a few cheerful remarks on the subject of hope and passed the matter by.

I knew Dr. Savage but slightly, and that only in connection with my case. He was an eminent disciple of that surgical school which would rather operate than save. He had the reputation of being an extraordinarily cold-hearted and skilful surgeon. He would cut open anything, from a dog to a friend, solely in the interests of science, and then, if he had made a mistake in diagnosis, which sometimes happened, he would treat the matter as lightly as you would a letter which you had opened by mistake. I had never been attracted toward him, although I respected his surgical skill and rather trembled before it. I had

given my wife minute instructions only a few days before that, whatever happened, Dr. Savage was not to operate on me. His appearance before the Grand Jury in this murder case had been dark, masterful and convincing. I did not look to him for any favor, and I must confess that I hardly knew how to begin when I found myself seated before him, his skeptical eyes resting critically upon me.

"Doctor," I said, "I have come to you on an extraordinary subject."

As I said this I noted his lips tighten a trifle and his eyes wander toward the cabinet at his side. He did not reply, and I had to go on.

"You see, it is this way," I said. "I have been pursued by the spirit of a dead man."

As I concluded this statement I could have sworn that a look of relief quickly passed over his countenance. That he was the last man in the world to believe in any message from a spirit land one could tell at a glance. His features hardened with heavy sarcasm, and his manner now assumed that exasperating superiority which a sane person feels toward a paranceac.

"Really," he said condescendingly, "I had not suspected this of you. Tell me more about it."

With that I plunged into the story and told him everything there was to tell. I described to him the first appearances of the mark of the thumb, how they pursued me in accelerating tempo, what I had learned from Miss Osborne, and I then told him that I had come to ask him to give me the thumb itself, if he had kept it as a specimen in that gruesome collection of which every surgeon is proud.

When I had finished marshaling the facts in as precise a way as possible, I arose from my chair and walked nervously to and fro before the great surgeon's desk. Out of the tail of my eye I could see that Dr. Savage followed my pendulum movements with ill-concealed amusement.

"I hardly know what to believe," he said pityingly. "Won't you take a cigar?"

At that moment it would have been impossible for me to have received anything from his hands. His personality was exceedingly repulsive to me; more so than ever before. Yet I feared lest, like many others, I too should come under the sway of his intellectual momentum.

"I do not feel like doubting your story at this time," he continued, "especially as a part of it tallies with my own memory. If I remember rightly I did cut off an Indian's thumb eighteen months ago, and I have it here in my room preserved in alcohol and very tightly sealed. The fact of it is, this Indian, or Swami, whatever you may call him, was attacked by one of the most malignant and rarest diseases known to our pathology. Such a case as his had not been heard of before in this degree of latitude, and it would be out of the question for me to let the specimen go out of my possession."

"But, doctor—" I interrupted.

He stilled me with an upward wave of his hand, and continued with irritating placidity:

"For this reason—in the first place, that thumb is a public menace, and if by any manner or means it should become unsealed or escape from its glass bottle, an epidemic of plague is very likely to sweep over the section where the accident happens. In the second place, as I said before, it is a unique specimen, and as such belongs in a medical collection, where I have for some time intended to place it."

He paused and looked up at me as I stood before him with that cool, superior stare which may hypnotize a woman, but which always maddens a man.

"Well, doctor," I said, "what you have stated may be true, but I have got to have that thumb."

"You can look at it if you like," said Dr. Savage, with the air of a man willing to dangle a piece of meat before a famished dog.

Going to his cabinet and taking a bunch of keys from his waistcoat pocket, he unlocked the door and swung it open. Impelled by a curi-

osity which I could not restrain, I had followed him across the soft carpet and peered over his shoulder into that receptacle of instruments and mortuary relics, both of which were evidences of his famous skill. Upon the topmost shelf a row of large and small bottles confronted me; each was the result of some successful operation. The shelves below were filled with cases of assorted instruments, all sterilized and polished to a high degree of perfection.

There is always a peculiar fascination about a kit of surgical instruments. They can be so murderous, and they may be so merciful. They have the beneficent power to heal, as well as the cruel ability to carve. But what struck my attention first of all in Dr. Savage's collection was a long, sharp, needle-like instrument, with a handle somewhat like a dagger. It was, in fact, a huge steel pin, and its point came to such a degree of sharpness that it was lost in the atmosphere itself.

While the doctor was searching with his hand in the back part of the upper shelf for the bottle he required, I had reached under his uplifted arm and abstracted from its resting-place this gigantic needle. As the doctor turned upon me, holding what he had sought for in his hand, we confronted each other—he with the thumb, I with that stiletto, which seemed to have come down from some medieval time; a grim inheritance of the assassinating days of the house of Borgia.

"Sir!" exclaimed the doctor, flushing to the roots of his coarse, black hair, and unable, for the moment, to control the surprise which the sight of that thing in my hand caused him. Even a surgeon is human, and may be caught off his steel guard. But I looked at him and smiled. It could not have been a very pleasant smile, for instinctively I felt that our positions had shifted, and that the advantage which he had held over me had vanished. My eyes and my intonation must have betrayed the thoughts that galloped through my brain, for it was on the evidence of such an instrument

as this that my client had been held for murder in the first degree, and it had been proved that Dr. Savage, with the exception of the defendant whom I was trying to save, was the last one to see the murdered man alive. My thoughts, my suspicions, my instantaneous conclusions must have been clear to him as I said in as offhand a manner as possible:

"This is a very curious instrument, doctor; do you ever use this in operations? I do not remember ever seeing one just like it in the published list of surgical instruments, and I have made quite a study of the matter since this case has fallen into my hands."

The doctor put the glass phial containing Santokh Das's thumb upon his large consulting-table. He then confronted me and said:

"What do you mean? If you mean anything, out with it. We are here alone, and man to man."

He stopped. His lips were trembling as he uttered these quick, nervous words; coming from him, they were tantamount to commands. His eyes, hitherto controlled and cold, opened and shut quickly, showing that he was under a tense nervous excitement. That he had not held himself better in hand surprised me.

"You are making a great deal out of a little, doctor," I said in as quiet a way as I could. "I have come here for a thumb, and I think that you will be willing to give it to me, provided that I can guarantee that the bottle will be unopened in this country. It is of no use to you except as a specimen, and it is of every use to me because of my peculiar circumstances. I mean I am a haunted man."

"I don't know whether I shall or not," exploded the doctor.

He held out his hand, expecting me to put in it the steel pin which I was tightly grasping by its handle. This pin was almost a foot long, and in the sunlight it gleamed like the baleful stab from a maddened eye.

"No," I said, "doctor, this is a very pretty instrument, and it will make

quite a sensation before the jury; I think you understand."

The physician turned frightfully pale and staggered to his seat.

"You wouldn't do that," he muttered. "You have no evidence. I am an honorable man, and the very suspicion would hurt me immeasurably. I cannot afford it. Let me have the instrument, if you please. It belongs to me, sir."

His words grew feebler as he uttered them. His whole manner had lost that aggressive superiority which was so characteristic of the man.

"Dr. Savage," I said, and this time there was nothing flippant in my voice, "do you know what I think? I think that my client is innocent. Now I am not going to accuse you of murder, but I suspect that you tried a little experiment upon a dying man—let us say with this instrument in my hand—and that it didn't turn out exactly as you expected. Am I not right?"

The doctor did not answer, but stared at me fixedly. He looked overcome with horror and fear.

"I will go a step further, Dr. Savage," I continued, feeling rather sorry for him, "and say this; I have a feeling that the experiment which might have been performed by you upon your patient was done entirely from a beneficent standpoint, and was intended to help rather than to harm. Now I know as well as you do that surgeons of the school which you represent feel the necessity of experimenting on their patients from time to time when they can do so safely. This is a temporary madness; it may affect any of you. Now I will not say this is a case of the kind. I will go so far as to say I believe you tried to do the right thing by the patient in question. Am I right? Or am I not?"

Dr. Savage moistened his lips and looked at me dully.

"The only trouble about it is," I continued, "it would have been very much wiser to have acknowledged the mistake, and so relieved a poor man of the accusation of murder—would it not?"

I arose to go. I carefully slipped that needle-like stiletto into my inner breast-pocket, buttoned my coat, and stood by the door. Dr. Savage made no motion to stop me. He was still ashen pale, but the red color was beginning to surge through his hands and upward from his neck. I had pity for him and I had no pity.

"My dear doctor," I said as persuasively as I could, with my hand on the knob, "this is my home address."

I scribbled on a card and laid it on the table by the door.

"It might not be," I continued, "a very unwise thing for you to send me a brief statement in your own hand, signed by yourself—of the facts of the case. This might also be accompanied by Santokh Das's thumb. It is not at all a hard matter to have my case *nolle prosequi* by the district attorney on such evidence as you might give, and there the matter will rest. While I believe that there are doctors who ought to be hung for murder, nobody would suspect that *you* had been guilty of anything but an indiscretion, and in fact, no one need know anything about it at all."

By the time I had finished, the doctor's face was as red with arterial blood as if he were threatened with apoplexy. His eyes uttered all the maledictions and curses of an entrapped fugitive from justice, but his lips could not form themselves to say a word.

"It is unnecessary for me to add," I said softly, opening the door, "that as soon as the little statement I mentioned is received by me, your unique instrument will be immediately returned. The matter of the thumb I trust entirely to your good will."

Outside the front door I drew a deep breath of wonder and relief.

"Ah, Santokh Das!" I kept repeating to myself, "Santokh Das! Is this the reward you had in store for me, provided I obeyed your behest?"

That night I was alone in my study, lying on the couch and wondering. I had told my wife that I should be busy in the office until late, and she had

therefore flitted to one of those bridge-whist parties for which our petty suburban villages are so justly infamous. There I lay, wondering about many things. Before me the half-opened desk beckoned me to work; beside me, half hidden by an Indian screen, the Buddha gazed straight at me from its cornelian-lit eyes, gently inciting me to that state of Nirvana from whose lotus-banked sleep there is no desire for return. I was thinking about the problems of clairvoyance; that strange state in which a man perceives what he does not see. We read a great deal about an animal's instinct and about a good woman's unerring intuition. These qualities always lead us to the borderland of a mystery which we are on the point of unraveling. What is there more subtle and elusive, and yet what more convincing of a spirit state than sudden vision into a man's character, when all that he offers to our eyes is but a blank and placid wall? The instinctive leap that I had made that morning in the doctor's house startled me. What if I had failed to attain, and had fallen back into a precipice of my own creating? And yet the impression which his first look toward the cabinet had given me had been overmastering. I *felt* his guilt—I *knew* his guilt; and yet, what I felt and knew no person in the world could prove but himself. Had that intuition, which comes to a man but rarely, failed, I should have been guilty of an unpardonable insult. Now I felt that I had saved a life. But what of the doctor? Would he bluff it out, or would the weakness that comes upon a strong man when his armor is pierced lead him to follow out my parting suggestion and put his secret in my hands? Possibly some of the inherent honesty which he possessed, and which had been brought to bay, might also aid in persuading him to do this.

It was nearly ten o'clock. My wife was not expected for some hours, and our maid had not yet returned from paying her devotions at her weekly Hibernian Grove. I must confess that I was wrought to a high pitch of ex-

cited expectation. Tomorrow would decide many things for me. It would decide the fate of my innocent client; it would decide my own relief from spirit aggression. I felt that if I could pass by these two crises nothing in the world could ever again trouble me very much.

There was a ring at the front door. I jumped from the sofa and went to answer the summons. There stood a small messenger-boy with the wild eye of one who never slept. He handed me a package and said there was an answer. I left him in the vestibule and hurried to my study and shut the door. I went to my desk. Upon it, in the dim light of a distant piano lamp, gleamed that needle-like stiletto which I had abducted from Dr. Savage's office. This I had been observing under the microscope, and I was astounded at its strength and its temper. I cut the cord of the package with my shears, and with great care took out from the box the bottle which contained the alcoholized thumb of Santokh Das. Beneath this was an envelope sealed with red wax and addressed in a sharp hand to me. With a leisure which is incomprehensible to me now, I snipped the top of the envelope by the postage stamp and drew out the letter. Every word of it is stenciled to this day upon my memory. It ran:

MY DEAR SIR:

It sometimes happens that an operation will end disastrously. It also happens that if the knowledge of this disaster can be concealed, the surgeon may conceal it. In my personal career of twenty years in public practice, the loss of patients from a mistaken diagnosis or from an unfortunate operation has been so slight as to form a ridiculously low percentage amid thousands of lives saved. That Mr. Dalton, for whose murder his attendant is now awaiting trial, had a cyst in the brain just behind the right eye, I had no doubt. To operate was either to save or to kill. I did not care to kill, and I preferred to save, but he refused an operation. It was not a hard matter, after I had seen him asleep, that unfortunate night, for me to administer a few whiffs of chloroform and perform, with the instrument in your possession, an operation which I felt was necessary. On account of the extreme rarity, if not uniqueness, of this experiment, I preferred to take the entire responsibility

and do it alone. To my mind the operation was entirely successful, but the patient, already debilitated by long disease, was unable to rally from the effects of the anesthetic. I admit that in the flurry following the discovery of what happened I lacked courage to tell what my part had been. How you could have divined this at a mere glance I cannot tell. But you have done so, and I place my honor and that of my profession in your hands. I suppose that if every surgeon were indicted for murder for the mistakes that he made there would be few of us left, even to man the hospital staffs.

If this letter is satisfactory I should like to have you return by messenger the instrument which you took with you. You are welcome to the thumb, but I warn you to be careful about its being unsealed.

Very truly yours,

J. CUTTING SAVAGE.

I folded this naïve and very remarkable letter and put it in my pocket, and with great care packed up the surgical pin in the box and gave it to the boy. Then I threw myself down again on the sofa and mused.

Instead of the stiletto on the desk, the bottle, with its gruesome relic, gleamed like a dull paste jewel in the dim light. On the side of the room adjacent to the desk the Indian screen upon which fantastic Oriental scenes had been embroidered in soft silks cast a shadow like two horns. I watched this shadow with unconscious intentness, for my mind had gone past the doctor and past my client at express speed, and was fixed upon Santokh Das. What a strange thing had his messages to me accomplished! There was the thumb, his thumb, awaiting his pleasure to be reunited again to its dismembered part. And with that thumb had come the release of my client. Do spirits work their will with us along the lines of the least resistance in such a manner that we do not recognize either their presence or their leadership? Then once in a while a finger is pointed at you out of the darkness of the other world, and you are held up, awed and bewildered. And no one knows at whom that finger may be next directed.

As I mused with staring eyes that hardly realized what they saw, my fixed

gaze was arrested by a new phenomenon. The shadow of the screen, those two parallel black horns, began slowly to widen. It was as if someone behind the screen were opening it. In the dull light the one horn moved nearer to the desk, the other nearer to the Buddha. Breathless, incapable of motion, unable even to speak, I noted this bewildering effect. Then the shadow crept further. It attacked the desk and finally engulfed it.

With supreme effort which caused me pain, such as I had never experienced before, I turned my head to the door, knowing that if it were open someone had entered. But the door was closed. Then I knew that no one was in the room but myself and that something unseen by me, and only to be recognized by the Buddha himself. Then the shadow halted. In the darkness of the quiet that hovered over my desk I thought I heard a faint rustling, and would have called out if I could; but the only words that would have stuttered through my lips were "Santokh Das." These I dared not utter. With a cold perspiration chilling and bathing every portion of my body I waited the action of that shadow.

And now I do not know whether I lost consciousness or not. I do not think I did; but after what seemed to me an immeasurable lapse of time the shadow of the left-hand horn gradually began to recede. Slowly it moved back and uncovered the desk to light. There were the left-hand drawers; there was my inkstand; there was my calendar—and there it all lay before my sight in the dim but sufficient light. But where was the bottle? That luminous globe of glass had disappeared. The screen came to its original position, and I leaped to my feet. This time I could not help uttering the words.

"Santokh Das!" I cried, "Santokh Das!"

But the screen was empty; the thumb was gone; and the Buddha looked out into space with that placid expression which knows all things and notices none.



MINDING THE BABY

SHE "minds the baby." What a care,
 O nursemaid, with dejected air,
 To carry him about all day,
 To make him eat and sleep and play;
 It must be something hard to bear.

The parents, too, unlucky pair,
 The selfsame bonds of serfdom share;
 He issues shrill commands, and they—
 They mind the baby.

But I, who live across the stair,
 And hear his howling everywhere;
 Who can't, howe'er I hope and pray,
 Escape the tumult of the fray;
 Far more than all the rest, I swear,
 I mind the baby!

GRAHAM HORNE.



HER GOINGS ON

"ANYTHING going on while I've been away?" inquired a prominent Kansan, who had been absent for some time.

"Nothing special, except Miss Ducky Burcher and the cyclone," replied another prominent Kansan, who had not been away. "You see, when the latter tore down the former's paw's house, week before last, it scattered several bundles of her love letters blamed near all over this and the adj'ining counties. She hasn't found more than twenty-five or thirty of 'em yet, and the way she's been going on ever since is something mighty special, and pretty considerable near equal to the cyclone, lemme tell you."



"DOES Ferdy ever lose his head at the race-track?"
 "Oh, no; the bookmakers won't take so small a bet as *that*, you know."

THE GOTHIC MOOD

By Lucia Chamberlain

HE had come down from the Bohemian Club "jinks" that afternoon. The three days in the redwoods had left his childlike soul entirely irresponsible. He had dined with Nettleton at the "Poodle Dog," and Nettleton had put the finishing touch to his volatility by entreating him to be serious. Nettleton, it seemed, had arrived at the one great momentous fact of his life, and desired all the world to arrive with him. The discovery that the great, momentous fact was a feather-headed girl had not tended to lessen Christopher's light-heartedness.

The momentousness of Nettleton's case arose from his extreme uncertainty as to the feelings of the girl. She, it appeared, was a singularly secretive creature, who refused to divulge a hint of her sentiments for the better encouragement of Nettleton's. And, from the lobster to the liqueurs, Nettleton had not ceased to beseech Christopher Nicholls to cast his discerning eye on the agitating young person in question, and return a verdict, which in one way or the other would put an end to Nettleton's uncertainty.

At a more responsible hour Christopher might have warned Nettleton against the danger of departing the safe single path. But at the moment the merry side of life was uppermost; and everything, even to the marrying of Nettleton, looked like a diverting game. He accepted the tribute to his discerning eye without a blink, and hoped the girl in the case wasn't one of those to whom he himself happened to be engaged.

"Oh, no," Nettleton nervously re-

assured him. He was sure Christopher had never met her. Her name was Ida Barker, and she came from Siskiyou, but had spent two winters in London, and was for the first time in San Francisco. The sort of girl who would go from Siskiyou to London struck Christopher as rather gorgeous. She chimed with his mood. He suggested calling that evening, and grew petulant when Nettleton objected. There was no use, Nettleton argued. The Barkers had a big reception on that night, Ida would be receiving, and there wouldn't be a chance to say six words to her. Besides, Nettleton couldn't bear to see her being nice to a lot of Johnnies.

Christopher pointed out to him that with such an attitude his chances of any girl would be small. Nevertheless, if Nettleton insisted, they would call on Miss Barker Sunday afternoon, and he would see what could be done about it.

He parted from Nettleton wearing his responsibility like a feather. In the lobby of the "Poodle Dog" he thoughtlessly bought a *Town Letter*, a transaction that left him without a cent. Ordinarily the prospect of walking out to the "western addition" would have depressed him, but Christopher and San Francisco had met in corresponding moods that night, a little freakish, a little adventurous.

As he scaled the first hill-crest past the terraced garden walls, he had that feeling the town at night sometimes gave him—that he didn't know what was coming next around the corner. It was a night of fantastic fog. He could hear the "old cow" hoo—hoo—

hoing out at Point Lobos. The gas lamps made iridescent eyes at him through the flying mist. The long, empty, uphill blocks of the "western addition" looked lonesome. He felt the evening had ended too soon, just as he was getting his second wind, in fact. The spirit of the "high jinks" lingered elfishly with him, presenting the world like a vast redwood revel, with Nettleton officiating as high priest.

The memory of Nettleton made him grim. She must be a remarkable person, the girl who could reduce the one, only, irresistible "Nettie" to such a helpless stew. Might she not even make it difficult for Christopher's discerning eye to penetrate her reserve? He began to speculate on the best way to outmaneuver her probable maneuvers. He imagined it all—the skill with which he would lead the conversation around to Nettleton; the noble magnanimity—if she were pretty—with which he would hold up "Nettie's" attractions in the lime-light. He had just arrived at the flattering spectacle of Nettleton's gratitude when he caught sight of the ladder.

Through wraiths of flying fog it spindled up, black, incredibly long and spidery, its top rung resting a short step below a window in the second story. From the opposite curb Christopher took cognizance of it. The house was one of those monumental wooden mansions, the pride of the early eighties. The vague outline of a swinging platform and a smell of turpentine suggested it was receiving its annual coat of cold gray paint. With this also the ladder may have had to do, but to Christopher Nicholls it appeared merely as an invitation.

He crossed the street with his fascinated gaze on the window at which the ladder ended—a window that showed a gap like a dark exclamation. Christopher's reputation for eccentricity was based on the fact that he sometimes did the sort of things that other people, all their lives, have secretly longed to do. He had never gone into a house by a ladder before, and he wondered how it would seem.

He looked all around him, and saw only the tail light of a cable car gliding off into the fog. Softly, rung by rung, he mounted the ladder. It sagged indiscreetly in the middle, but Christopher ignored it. It was good form to pass over discrepancies hastily. The open window above him invitingly beckoned. It showed less dark than he had first fancied. A faint penumbra of light began to glow through the mist. Too dim for full illumination, too bright for slumber, it suggested a room certainly unoccupied. But it was a nasty window to get through. In saving his shirt front he kicked a flower-pot off the window-sill into his opera hat. He listened, to make sure the light crash had not roused the house, but the house remained supremely indifferent. It even seemed to possess a low murmurous voice of its own, intent on its personal affairs. The room was of a gender unmistakably feminine. He would have preferred it to be neuter—a trunk-room, or even a bath; and the quantity of silk and velvet coats that heaped the bed worried him with their suggestion of multitudinous femininity that, momentarily, might pounce on him.

It had not occurred to him while mounting the ladder what he would do upon getting off it. But his motto was progress. He bent his ear to the keyhole, listening. There reached him a high incessant chatter like an aviary at a distance. There were no two questions about that well-known sound. A reception was going on downstairs. Opportunity opened out before him like a telescope. He was certain he had never met his involuntary hostess; but that seemed no argument against his being popular. He took his hat, which neatly contained the pieces of the flower-pot, and set it carefully away in a convenient clothes closet together with his overcoat. It was safer to erase false steps as one went.

He opened the door with a pleasurable uncertainty of what he would find on the other side. He found a hall—a sort of gallery—empty, but discon-

certingly bright, and the confusion of talking and moving about that came up to him from the rooms below made him feel as if he had plunged visibly into the midst of the revel. Opposite him was the stair. It was of a type found only in such houses, and occasionally on the stage in grand opera. It gave one descending the conspicuousness of a processional. Dearly Christopher would have loved to make a triumphal entry down the middle of it, but for once discretion got the better of his valor. Keeping well to the wall he was edging past it, when out of the parti-colored mob that packed the room below a young man emerged, and after a quick glance about him, began hurriedly to ascend the stair.

He had not taken six steps before a woman—and all the startled Christopher took in at the time was that she was elephantine, and had three short green feathers in her hair—came hastily after him and arrested him with a vigorous tap of her fan. Christopher saw the young man turn, but didn't wait to see more. He sped down the lighted gallery that in a few strides became a hall dim-lit with single gas-jets, burrowing away through a limitless house. The architecture of such houses he knew invariably included a side stair of the formality of a grain chute, and it was this he hoped to light upon. He came upon it presently a little farther along the hall. He all but fell down it. It descended unexpectedly, furtively, without balusters, between blank walls; and a malicious bend in the middle concealed its ultimate destination.

With his foot on the first stair he paused, arrested by a sound below. It was like the stir of silk. Then, suppressed, tremulous, a voice floated up to him: "Coo-ee," scarcely more than a tender breath. It went through Christopher with a pricking thrill. The house was a castle of surprises! "Coo-ee," he called expectantly, craning down the stair.

The answer came back, sharper, more breathless: "Harry!" And be-

fore Christopher could perjure himself again she flashed around the turn of the stair. The soft rush of her silk was fairly upon him. She was on the stair below him before she flung back her head and saw his face.

With a smothered exclamation she swayed, would have toppled back down the stairs, but Christopher gallantly clutched her. It was the least he could do when she had rushed so precipitately to meet him. For a moment he felt the flutter of her agitated breath on his face. Then, with a rapid gliding movement, that even at the moment impressed him as adroit, she slid through his grasp and took a step back, and downward. It was too dark to see faces clearly.

"Were you looking for someone?" she icily inquired.

Christopher was aggrieved. "You don't suppose a man can hear the call I did, and not be looking for someone?"

"There is no necessity for impertinence," she said in a voice at once choked and cold. "I know very well who you are, and I request you to withdraw immediately from my private concerns. I will not allow you to interfere!"

"Certainly," said Christopher meekly, "I will withdraw, but first would you mind telling me who I am?"

His answer seemed to surprise her. She hesitated a moment. "You're the detective," she threw at him defiantly.

"Detective?" said Christopher blankly. Even in that dim light his helpless amazement was manifest. He could see her, palpitant, incredulous, peering up at him in the half-dark.

"Well, if you're a burglar—" she began, with an obvious note of relief.

"Look here," said Christopher plaintively, "there must be upward of five hundred perfectly respectable people here tonight, and why you insist I must be either a detective or a burglar I can't understand."

"But if you're not," she demanded, "what in the world are you doing here?"

"Is it any queerer," Christopher

pointed out to her, "for me to call downstairs than for you to call up?"

She rustled. He could see the poise of her considering head. The faint light caught on dull gold coils of hair. When she spoke again her voice was low, and carried a persuasive note.

"Then if you are neither a burglar nor a detective, I take it you are a gentleman. Can you tell me, on your honor, that you were alone; that you passed no one in the upper hall?"

"On my honor, there wasn't another soul," he earnestly assured her. "Wait," he added, beginning to grasp the situation. "I did see something—as I passed the grand staircase. I saw a man coming up——"

"What was he like?" she breathlessly interrupted.

"Hurried," said Christopher promptly; "and a woman, very large, with three green feathers in her hair——"

"Mama!" the girl gasped. "She didn't stop him?"

"Effectually," said Christopher.

"Oh," she wailed despairingly, "and he never knows how to get away from her!"

"But I would," said Christopher enthusiastically. "You'd better let me distract her!"

"But it's too late," she cried; "don't you see we had only five minutes while James wasn't at the side door to—I—oh, what have I said!" she caught herself.

"It's never too late," said Christopher confidently; "besides, you've no idea what an ingenious person I am."

"You're very kind," she began—she ended with a catch of laughter. "But you know I have no idea—not the faintest—who you are!"

"That doesn't matter as long as you know what I am like," he eagerly assured her. "In the first place I'm guileless; in the second—as I said—I'm ingenious; and thirdly, tonight, I'm inspired. You may never find me like this again!"

She looked at him with a dubious dimple. "But we can't stay here," she urged. "We'd better go into the billiard-room."

"Where your mother will probably annex us," said Christopher bitterly.

"Oh, no," the girl sighed; "she'll be quite satisfied with poor Harry!"

Christopher couldn't help a sense of satisfaction that "poor Harry" was thus temporarily disposed of, as he watched descending beside him this dimly seen presence of shining hair and whispering silk.

At the foot of the stair a portière billowed gustily in a draught. He caught it aside and as she passed him in the full light he saw she was shorter than he had supposed, and slimly plump, with dimples where other women had hollows. She wore a blue band in blond hair that seemed slipping down her shoulders. She gave him a glance from blue eyes fiery with excitement.

Doubly caught by the light of the look and the lure of adventure, Christopher followed her into the all but empty billiard-room beyond whose half-drawn curtains appeared the crowded vista of the double drawing-rooms.

"You were going to say——?" she prompted him, subsiding in the deep, leather-covered lounge. "You were going to say, Mr. ——?" She looked at him expectantly.

"Nicholls," said Christopher promptly. "I was going to say that you don't in the least look like the sort of person a detective would follow about."

She leaned back among the cushions, contemplating him at ease. Her crossed feet showed blue slippers with red heels. Her breast heaved slower with subsiding agitation.

"Of course you must think that very odd," she agreed, pushing in the opal dagger that seemed the one thing that prevented him from knowing how long her hair was. "You see, it was on account of the punch-bowl."

"Punch-bowl?" Christopher vaguely repeated.

"M'm!" she nodded to him. "It's gold; and the papers happened to mention it. Mama got very nervous. She seemed to think it would be easy

for a man to slip away with a fifty-pound punch-bowl, so she had up a detective to keep an eye on it. And you see"—the young woman made an impressive pause, leaning toward him a little breathlessly—"when I found you on the stairs I thought, of course, you were he! And I was cross! For people had been getting in our way all the evening, and James being on guard at the side door on account of the punch-bowl, I knew it was our one chance!"

"But if your mother knows—" Christopher began, dismayed.

"Oh, she doesn't know, but she suspects! You see, we tried to elope once before. So she has kept tight hold of me all the evening. This is the first chance I've had to give her the slip—and now she's got Harry!"

The corners of the young woman's mouth drooped dolefully.

"She seems to object pretty vigorously," Christopher commented.

The girl shook her golden head. "Oh, she simply hates Harry. And, besides, she wants me to like someone else."

"And he is out of the question?" Christopher suggested. She looked at him with blank disdain.

"He isn't Harry."

"Ah, I see," Christopher meekly agreed. "That does rather knock him out! He must be a brute."

"Oh, no, he may be very nice," she said indifferently, "only he's so horribly in the way! You may think that eloping is easy. I've tried and tried," she went on, dropping her voice to a melodious mutter that brought her lips delightfully near his cheek, "and this is our very last chance; I'll have to go to San Diego tomorrow if I can't get out of this house tonight!"

"And you say the side door is impossible?" said Christopher thoughtfully.

"Oh, quite! James is a teetotaler, and there's no use bribing him. I've tried it." Evidently she was a resourceful young person.

"But how did you manage the first time?" Christopher objected.

"I told him Mariana wanted to speak to him in the butler's pantry."

Christopher looked at her admiringly.

"And, of course, *that* can't be repeated," she finished.

"Oh," she cried, "you've no idea how awful it is to be shut up in this place full of doors and windows, and not be able to get out of one of them!"

"Wait," said Christopher, jumping up. "I have it! At least I have half of it." He glowed with his inspiration. "But you've got to help me out with the rest."

"The rest?" she puzzled.

"Yes. How are we going to persuade her to relinquish Harry? That's the first thing we've got to do."

She sat up with a brightening eye. "I'll tell you what we could do!" They had their heads together over it. "We could get up a scare about the punch-bowl."

"Great!" said Christopher; "that's where your detective comes in—that's me."

"But there's one here already," she protested.

"What's the matter with being another—a new man just up from headquarters?"

"But wait," she clasped his arm in her anxiety. "What's the use of getting Harry if we don't know how we're going to get out?"

"But we do," said Christopher triumphantly. "Trust me. I'll arrange all that. Is there a cab?"

"Around the corner on California street. It's been waiting two hours."

"Then as soon as the bustle begins you'd better be where I found you first." He smiled at that recollection. "There's just one thing," he added, "that I've got to be perfectly sure of, or we may make a hash of it: If you whistle will Harry jump?"

She frowned faintly. "Of course! But you're not very nice about Harry."

"Why should I be?" said Christopher resentfully. "He's going to take you away."

The idea that it was through his assistance that she was about to vanish over the horizon line with Harry had

just occurred to him. But the agreeable consciousness of his magnanimous sacrifice, together with the knowledge he was about to turn this complacent assemblage upside down with apprehension, helped to buoy him up. Looking right and left as he steered his course through the crowd, he was relieved to find no faces he knew. It would be decidedly awkward, he thought, to be recognized as Christopher Nicholls at the moment he was about to become a detective. But as the certain knowledge of the entire strangeness of this mob came home to him he grew buoyant.

Without doubt the attention of mama could be distracted in some less considerable way than he had chosen, but the very stupendousness of the undertaking, the idea of throwing five hundred people into a panic that two might escape, was engaging to Christopher Nicholls.

He steered for the three green feathers under whose wing the captive Harry still sulked. Very likely Harry was guileless, but his dark and sullen visage looked a very villain's, whereas it was easy for Christopher to look innocent, his eyes were so wide apart. Approaching his unknown hostess his manner slid from the suave to the brusque.

"Pardon me, madam," he said crisply, stepping between the lady and her captive, "I must speak to you privately a moment. I am Detective Garvin"—he manufactured the name on the spur of the minute—"just up from headquarters. I understand you sent for one of my men tonight. Is he here?"

"Why, I—yes!" she stammered.

"Then what is he doing?" said Christopher sternly. "I happened to be driving by on another case when I saw something suspicious——"

"Not Ida!" gasped his victim, flinging a frightened glance at Harry as if she feared to find him miraculously vanished.

Christopher wondered where he had heard that name before, but this was not a time to ponder.

"Not at all!" he said curtly. "A man whom I recognized—have had under suspicion for a year—entering your house. I understood you had a punch-bowl——"

"Had!" The past tense was wrung from the poor lady in a voice of anguish. She gave a wild look over a sea of heads in the direction of the dining-room.

"Be calm," Christopher muttered. "I have my man as a guard at the front door. I shall place a guard at the back, and escape will be impossible. All that remains will be to find him." His glance shifted to the now thoroughly alert Harry. "Can you identify this person?" he demanded. He simply couldn't help it.

"Oh, yes, certainly," she hurriedly reassured him. "Mr. Hadley. I know him very well."

"Ah!" said Christopher magisterially, "in that case I shall require his assistance. Madam," he ended impressively, "I advise you to remain where you are until I return." And taking the reluctant Harry by the arm he began to propel him through the crowd, where already the news had begun to travel in a ripple of excitement.

"Let go of me, you!" the young man objected. "I'm not a criminal."

"No more am I a detective," said Christopher. "Come on, you ass! She's waiting for you."

"She?" The young man's anger dissolved in hot anxiety.

"The one woman," said Christopher, "waiting on the side stair. And you'll get there this time if I break every bone in your body."

He could see the three green feathers frantically struggling in the direction of the dining-room for the better protection of the punch-bowl. Christopher was in the full tide of happiness; and the sight of women nervously clutching their combs and necklaces, and trying to back away from the people near them filled him with regret that he couldn't also impersonate the burglar.

"Are you there?" an anxious voice softly hailed them as they plunged

between the gusty portière that hid the stair. They glimpsed her above them, a dull gleam of golden hair, a pale luster of silk.

"Oh, Harry!" she cried. He was planted at the foot of the stair, bewildered, unresponsive, suspicious.

"See here, Ida, I want to know what this means? What are you doing?"

"Distracting mama's attention," she whispered.

"So that you can get out," said Christopher. They began explaining simultaneously from opposite sides of him, and through the avalanche of whispers Harry was occasionally audible, announcing his suspicions of Christopher and a decided preference for managing his own elopements.

"But you haven't!" Ida cried, and stamped her foot. She put her face close to his and murmured: "I should think if you loved me you'd be glad to get away no matter who arranged it. This is our chance! Do you want to go—or don't you?"

He growled.

"Very well," she added desperately, "then I'll go, with—Mr. Nicholls!"

"Bully!" Christopher whispered as he seized her arm and rushed her upstairs. They heard the feet of Harry furiously pursuing.

"But where are you taking us? Why are you going upstairs?" Ida breathlessly besought him.

"Wait and see," said Christopher, leading cautiously up the hall he had so recklessly rushed down an hour before. It seemed to him the murmur from below had risen a tone higher—thickened, confused, excited. A little further, and across the gallery rail they saw the drawing-rooms, a confused color mass, a social turmoil, and in one corner where the crowd was thickest the detective was questioning the identity of a miserable man who was endeavoring to explain how he happened there without an invitation. Christopher grasped the handle of the door nearest him.

"Hurry up. That crowd'll make a break in a minute," he warned them.

"But where in the world?" said Ida, staring about the room and at the bed of many coats.

"There," said Christopher, pointing to the window open on the foggy night.

"My good gracious!" she breathed as the upper part of the ladder grew visible, black and spidery through the vaporous white beneath. "Why, it must have been there all the time! But how in the world did you know it?"

"I happened to notice it as I was coming in," said Christopher modestly.

She gave his arm an excited little squeeze. "And does it go clear to the ground?" she incredulously demanded.

"Why, of course it does"—he couldn't help squeezing back—"and a cab at the foot of it."

Her eyes sparkled. "Harry, it goes clear to the ground!" she cried, and began excitedly to kilt up her pale blue skirts.

"Ida," he implored her hoarsely, "you'll break your neck!"

"I've never been down a ladder in my life!" said Ida enthusiastically. "You go first, Harry, so I won't be lonesome after I get down."

Christopher, with a malicious grin, watched the hapless Harry bump through the difficult window, and clamber downward through the foggy night. They saw his black head like a spider swinging down a web, growing smaller and grayer below them until it was swallowed in mist.

"Now you," said Christopher, and taking one of the multitudinous coats from the bed he wrapped it around her.

"You're coming, too?" she whispered.

"After you," said Christopher. Her face was just below his as he lowered her through the window. He saw she was laughing. Intrepid girl! He wanted to keep her. He only kept one hand until the other was sure of the ladder. Then she swung away from him. He saw her descending below him. Pale blue, pale gold, like a

fairly vanishing, she grew mistier in the mist. Now only a glimmering will-o'-the-wisp; now she disappeared. But the ladder had not ceased to vibrate before he heard voices—unmistakably feminine voices—approaching down the hall. Cold fear possessed him. He had no doubt that their destination was the room of the ladder. He slid through the window so hastily that fresh paint went with him. Under his frantic descent the ladder swung like a cradle. Overcoatless, hatless, breathless he landed at the foot.

"Here he is," said the voice of Ida. Her face shone luminous in the fog.

Christopher seized the hand she offered.

"Where's your cab?" he cried. "There are people up there; you haven't a second—ah, here it is!" He opened the carriage door.

"I should like it, you know, if you could be our best man!" said the embarrassed Harry.

"Thank you," said Christopher with his best vivacity. "I should be delighted, but I fear it is impossible. I am already indebted to you both for an interesting evening."

"I shall never forget your kindness," cried Ida from the carriage.

Christopher looked at her gloomily. "Any service I could do you, Miss—er—"

"Barker," she graciously prompted him.

Christopher gazed, his mouth agape, as if he swallowed the appellation bodily. His arms fell at his sides. "Barker," he repeated feebly, as recollection slowly overwhelmed him. "Ida Barker! Are you?"

"Mr. Nicholls," she cried, "is anything the matter? Are you ill?"

"No, no," Christopher managed to articulate, "nothing at all! I—I hope you will be happy—I mean I know of course you will! Only I——!"

He violently banged the carriage door on them, and shouted to the cabbie in a voice that carried up and down the blocks, "Drive on!"

He stood on the edge of the curb. He heard the cab furiously rattling down the street. He stuck his hands in his pockets and surveyed the ladder.

"'Nettie's' girl!" he solemnly ejaculated. "'Nettie's' girl!" he awesomely informed the winking street lamps opposite. "My Lord! and he asked me to"—the second thought doubled him up with helpless laughter—"asked me to find out what she thought of him! He can't say I haven't! Nice—but awfully in the way. Oh, no, he can never say I haven't done it!"

Ten minutes later the clerk in a corner drug-store was surprised at the entrance of a gentleman hatless, overcoatless, with a streak of fresh paint on very good evening clothes. He solemnly demanded pen and ink, and while the clerk rang up a hack he scrawled the following note:

MRS. BARKER,

DEAR MADAM: Kindly give bearer the opera hat with the flower-pot in it, which will be found in the closet of the room on the second story opposite the staircase, and oblige,

Yours very truly.

He hesitated a moment. Then smiled and added, "Garvin." The villainy was complete.



LIKE MANY OTHERS

"IS his auto fast?"
"Occasionally—in the mud."

UNE FEMME PRATIQUE

Par Camille Bruno

AUGUSTINE RENAUD À CLARA TERVILLE

MA CHÈRE CLARA: Laisse-moi d'abord te demander pardon d'avoir mis si longtemps à te répondre. Mais laisse-moi te dire aussi que je ne suis pas complètement en faute, car des émotions bien grandes et de bien absorbantes occupations ont été mon lot ces jours derniers. Bref, un mot me servira d'excuse: avant-hier, à la cathédrale, mon Paul a fait sa première communion.

Tu le sais, chère Clara, nous n'avons jamais eu, et n'avons jamais voulu avoir, qu'un enfant. Mais, j'ose le dire, nous l'avons aimé d'un amour inconnu aux imprévoyantes mères gigognes, aux pères absurdes qui croissent et multiplient en ce siècle de logis étroits et de mets falsifiés, comme on le faisait aux premiers âges, sous la tente, au milieu des moissons blondes et des chamelles nourricières. Nous l'avons couvé, ce fils unique, avec une jalouse sollicitude, et toute notre intelligence s'est mise en branle quand il s'agit d'organiser l'un des grandes actes de sa vie. Dans l'occurrence présente, le plus lourd de la besogne m'était naturellement échu, mon mari n'ayant pas une minute en dehors de ses plaidoiries.

Ne va pas entendre par là qu'il empoche de gros bénéfices! Nous n'en sommes pas là, malheureusement, mais il plaide gratis plutôt que de ne rien faire, car l'important est d'être connu. Et puis, le client qui ne paie pas vous recommande toujours à ceux qui paient. Ça l'acquitte aux frais d'autrui. Le pis de tout, ce sont les paysans qui salissent vos escaliers et vous donnent pour honoraires leurs

poulets trop durs ou leurs fruits trop mûrs. Quel plaisir j'aurai à balayer tout ce monde, le jour où les gens riches s'adresseront à Georges! En attendant j'ai des égards pour eux. A moins qu'ils ne soient en sabots—auquel cas je leur ouvre ma cuisine—je les fais introduire dans le salon, qui forme, avec l'antichambre et le cabinet de Georges, la totalité de l'appartement. Ah! dame, ce n'est pas vaste... mais ce n'est pas cher non plus. Nous prenons nos repas sur le balcon, dont un vitrage bien compris a fait une sorte de parloir. Le soir on défait un divan, et nous couchons dans le salon, laissant le cabinet à maman et l'antichambre à Paul. Je te réponds que, le lendemain, la bonne a de l'ouvrage pour tout remettre en place! Son cousin le pompier lui vient en aide, et c'est lui qui ouvre la porte aux clients, pour le seul plaisir d'être avec Adèle. Je l'en récompense en fermant les yeux sur bien des petites privautés qu'ils s'accordent. Après tout, ce qu'ils font ne me regarde pas. Pourquoi donc le regarderais-je?

Tout ceci est pour te dire que je suis encore, à Besançon, la petite femme sérieuse et popote que tu as connue à Nancy; mais ce que tu appelaï alors mes prodiges, n'était rien auprès des menus tours de force que j'accomplis quotidiennement. En vérité, ceux qui me rencontrent, le soir, chez le receveur ou le colonel, ne se doutent guère que j'ai passé des heures sous mon vitrage à recoudre mes jupes ou à nettoyer mes gants—ce qui ne m'empêche pas de parler de ma femme de chambre avec un air détaché qui te ferait rire aux larmes.

L'autre jour, par exemple, ma force d'âme a été mise à une rude épreuve. Chez le Président, à la fin d'un dîner, le maître d'hôtel a renversé une sauce sur certaine robe qui m'avait coûté un mois de travail. C'était un ancien châle à maman, où j'avais découpé vingt-sept morceaux rejoints par des coutures invisibles. Quand j'ai vu tomber cette horrible sauce, il m'a semblé que je recevais un coup de poing dans la poitrine; j'ai souri pourtant, et j'ai dit d'un air aimable: "Bah! j'en serai quitte pour écrire à Doucet de m'en faire une autre.— Doucet! répéta d'un ton aigre-doux la femme d'un de nos collègues, mais la moindre robe s'y paie vingt-cinq louis!—Chaque affaire plaidée par Georges m'en paierait dix, répondis-je effrontément." La dame était blême. Georges était confondu. Au retour, il m'a embrassée en me disant: "Bravo Titine! grâce à toi, ma carrière est assurée." Tu penses si ça m'a donné du courage.

Me voilà loin, penses-tu, de Paul et de sa première communion. Eh bien! non, ma chère, pas tant que tu le crois, car si jamais il m'a fallu allier l'économie et la représentation, ça a été dans cette circonstance. Je ne me dissimulais pas que ce serait un trou dans le budget, et, pour le combler un peu, j'ai eu tout d'abord recours aux parents et amis. Le petit a, sous ma dictée, écrit des lettres à tous ceux dont on pouvait espérer une gentillesse. Il ne demandait rien, bien entendu, si ce n'est une petite prière. Mais on sait ce que parler veut dire. En échange de ses missives il a reçu quinze paroissiens, cinquante images, autant de signets, deux sacré-cœurs en plâtre, et un calvaire en simili-bronze. A peine si ça valait les timbres-poste. Seule, la tante Luce a donné cinquante francs. Tout de suite je les ai pris à Paul, et je lui ai, pour cette somme, commandé un costume de drap fin et solide, bien large pour qu'il puisse le mettre longtemps, car le cher enfant pousse à vue d'œil et promet d'être un Patagon comme son papa.

Toi, ma chérie, tu avais agi, dès les premiers jours, en amie généreuse et parfaite. Grâce au compte que tu m'avais ouvert chez le premier pâtissier de la ville, j'ai pu offrir aux Bisontins un lunch dont ils se souviendront longtemps.

Ah! oui, nous étions bien émus, Georges et moi, quand ce pauvre petit est venu vers nous avec son brassard blanc et son visage heureux. Les bons pères l'avaient parfaitement préparé. Nous avons prié pour lui avec ferveur, et j'espère qu'il n'oubliera jamais ce beau jour. Dans l'après-midi, toute la ville est venue le complimenter et s'abattre sur ton lunch. J'avais exposé les cadeaux avec les noms des donateurs. On allait les voir; ça faisait diversion. Quand on en a eu assez, j'ai chanté des romances, Mme Aunet a dit des vers, et l'on nous a quittés très content de nous. Le lendemain Georges avait deux clients de plus. Ah! si nous pouvions recevoir souvent! On ne se figure pas ce que ça pousse un homme, ces choses-là! C'est comme mon talent de musique. Il m'a valu plus de relations qu'il n'est gros, c'est le cas de le dire. Il n'y a pas de fête réussie à Besançon si la petite Mme Renaud n'y fait entendre son répertoire de chansonnettes.

Il faut voir le préfet, quand je commence *les Deux Hémisphères*... Il ne se connaît plus. Voilà un homme enthousiaste! et qui pourrait pousser Georges... si seulement on le poussait un peu, lui...

20 mai.

Que dois-tu penser de moi, ma bonne Clara! Voilà huit jours que cette lettre bâille à côté de son enveloppe. Ecoute, et tu sauras pourquoi je n'ai pu la finir.

Figure-toi qu'au moment où je traçais l'adresse, le préfet en personne est arrivé chez moi. C'était mon jour, mais à cette heure prématurée, la maison n'était pas encore sous les armes. Pour qu'il ne remarquât pas le désordre du salon, j'ai fait appel à toutes mes grâces. J'ai fait asseoir mon pré-

fet près de moi, je l'ai étourdi de compliments, aveuglé de sourires, et il n'a tenu qu'à lui de croire que je le trouvais jeune et beau. Le cher homme recherche beaucoup ce genre d'illusions, et moi, en administrée nécessaire, je le grise du vin qu'il préfère. Tout allait donc le mieux du monde, jusqu'au moment où il m'a exposé l'objet de sa visite. Tu ne devineras jamais quel biribi lui a passé par la tête? Il veut faire jouer la pantomime de Werner à la préfecture, et me confier le rôle de "l'enfant prodige." Tu sais? ce pierrot en smoking et en culotte, que Mauricia Pellet joue avec une si crâne désinvolture?

Dame! il y avait beaucoup à dire pour. La dette de gratitude imposée au préfet, notre nom répété par mille personnes, imprimé dans tous les journaux de l'endroit; de nouvelles relations probables, et surtout, surtout la présentation à Gallung, ce gros banquier qui cherche un avocat pour son affaire des canaux bulgares.

Il y avait aussi à dire contre, mais chaque objection recevait un démenti. Je n'avais jamais joué la pantomime? mais une gentille petite femme a toujours bonne grâce à ce qu'elle essaie. On pouvait faire des comparaisons humiliantes avec la créatrice du rôle? qui, on? les Bisontins vont rarement à Paris et je gagerais que pas un d'entre eux n'a entendu "l'enfant prodige." Le costume était légèrement... révélateur? On me laisserait libre d'en modifier tel ou tel détail, d'allonger les endroits trop courts, et de faire flotter les parties collantes. Enfin, je m'inquiétais un peu de la dépense, mais une voix répondait en moi-même:

"Tu es une habile personne. Cette fois comme les autres, tu trouveras un expédient."

Malgré tout, j'hésitais encore, et le préfet ne savait plus quel argument me fournir, quand, par bonheur, Georges rentra. Oh! par exemple, il n'y alla pas par quatre chemins. De par son autorité maritale, il m'enjoignit d'accepter le rôle. J'acceptai donc. Le préfet était fou de joie; il ne savait

comment remercier Georges. Il ne nous a quittés que fort tard, après avoir formé des plans grandioses. Il veut inviter les gens de Vesoul et de Lons-le-Saunier. Il compte distribuer des programmes avec mon portrait dans l'angle gauche. Il doit placer au premier rang le gros banquier...

Lui, l'amphitryon, il se réserve les coulisses. A son aise! Je serais bien bête de lui refuser une faveur aussi platonique. Tu connais ma formule. C'est celle des musées entomologiques: "Regardez. Ne touchez pas." Ceux que ça amuse de me détailler peuvent s'offrir un joli coup d'œil. Pour le reste, c'est réservé à mon Georges.

Tu penses bien que, tout d'abord, je m'occupai du costume. Les souliers, je les avais, et aussi les bas de soie noire, un peu minces, où la peau transparaissait. Pour la culotte, je comptais faire arranger celle de Georges. Il ne l'a mise que deux fois. Elle est presque neuve, et dans les rognures, on trouverait de quoi raccommoder son gilet, qui ne bat plus que d'une aile. Tout de suite je l'ai mise, et j'ai marqué les coutures à reprendre. Au moment de raccourcir, j'ai eu des scrupules. Le père Aublin, qui déjà n'aime pas que je me déguise, que dirait-il, quand il saurait que sa pénitente... J'ai pris le parti de m'en remettre à Georges. Car, enfin, ces bas transparents... Mais le cher ami n'a pas entendu de cette oreille. Il a dit, avec justesse, que lorsqu'on a promis de faire une chose, il faut la bien faire, ou ne pas s'en mêler. Alors il a pris les ciseaux, et nous avons arrêté l'étoffe juste au-dessous du genou, que doit souligner la jarrettière.

Restait la veste. Ah! ça, c'était le plus dur. Pas moyen de s'en tirer à moins d'une trentaine de francs. Georges n'avait rien de frais, et d'ailleurs, de ses épaules aux miennes, il y a bien plus de différence que pour la culotte. Jamais on n'aurait pu remédier à ça. Devant cette difficulté, moi, j'étais prête à rendre le rôle. Mais Georges était résolu à tous les sacrifices: "Aie ta veste, me disait-il; on

s'arrangera. Je me passerai de café et de liqueur cet été, voilà tout." Ce pauvre ami! le vois-tu se privant, se rendant malade, peut-être! Les larmes m'en venaient aux yeux. Tout à coup, j'ai eu une idée; une idée admirable, géniale, lumineuse! La veste de Paul! J'ai couru la chercher. Le brassard y était encore. Je l'ai défait, et j'ai enfilé ça. Un miracle, ma chère! ça me moulait! Grâce à Dieu, à trente ans sonnés, je suis restée aussi mince qu'au jour des me noces, tout en étant plus ronde qu'on ne se le figure. Je te réponds qu'on s'en apercevra lorsque je porterai mon travesti.

Tu comprends maintenant, parfaite amie, pourquoi je n'ai pas eu le temps de t'écrire. Je suis dans le feu des études. Hier, j'ai répété en costume. Le préfet s'est pâmé devant mes jambes. En nous quittant, il nous a dit qu'il était mécontent de son avocat. Je crois que Georges tient son affaire.

J'ai été brûler un cierge à Saint-Maxence, et le soir, pendant que maman promenait Paul, j'ai fait avec mon mari, sur les remparts, une petite promenade sentimentale, car c'était notre anniversaire de mariage.

Adieu, bonne amie. Si je ne t'ai pas trop ennuyée avec tous ces détails, prouve-le-moi en m'écrivant bientôt. Je t'envoie un million de baisers, et je te promets de penser à toi au moment d'entrer en scène.

AUGUSTINE RENAUD.

P.-S.—Figure-toi que Paul n'a pas eu l'air content quand il a vu que je prenais sa veste. "C'est égal, maman —a-t-il dit avec une petite moue incroyable—tu la mets à un drôle de service!" Quelles idées ça a, hein, ces enfants?

A.-R.

Pour copie conforme.

CAMILLE BRUNO.



MENDICANTS

BLEAK, in wild rags of clouds, the day begins,
That passed so splendidly but yesterday,
Wrapped in magnificence of gold and gray
And poppy and rose. Now, burdened as with sins,
Their wildness clad in fogs, like coats of skins,
Tattered and streaked with rain, gaunt, clogged with clay,
The mendicant Hours take their somber way
Westward o'er earth, to which no sun-ray wins.
Their splashing sandals ooze; their footsteps drip,
Puddle and brim with moisture; their sad hair
Is tagged with haggard drops, that with their eyes'
Slow streams are blent; each sullen finger-tip
Rivers; while round them, in the drenched air,
Wearies the wind of their perpetual sighs.

MADISON CAWEIN.



BY the time some men have money enough ahead to get married they have enough sense not to.

THE THINGS WE SAY

By Virginia Woodward Cloud

THAT Timri Khan was a prince by blood and an original by natural endowment was unmistakable—according to Mrs. Hervy King, who was an adept in playing upon that harp of a thousand strings which is said to be composed of the spirits of just men.

That he was altogether unique and exclusive, and obtainable only for a few and choice occasions—and at high terms—but added to his desirability; for who of us would pause to gather orchids if they flourished after the manner of the field daisy? Timri Khan was superior and innocently arrogant, but with the arrogance of greatness. He upset all Mrs. Hervy King's preconceived ideas concerning "special features" for an evening, by declining to do tricks.

When he called to arrange for his reception by Mrs. Hervy King Timri Khan's long eyes passed slowly over her great drawing-room, hung with its heavy panels of red plush and outlined in black walnut, and under the apparent insignificance of his gaze its massiveness grew cumbersome, its hangings garish and its appointments too magnificent for beauty's exquisite prerogative.

He pointed to a corner, replete with cross-swords, shields and cushions, and said:

"I will be there."

"But, my dear prince, what shall you do? I mean"—Mrs. Hervy King stumbled slightly, for Timri Khan's powers had been verbally blazoned ahead of him—"have you any new tricks? Of course those at Mrs. Bulling's were superb! But if we have the

same thing the Bullings will say that I merely copied—and that is impossible!"

"Ticks?" murmured Timri Khan, his beautiful eyes gently upon Mrs. Hervy King's broad face. "No—no ticks."

"Then—then—but of course you will do something? And of course they will be enchanted."

A gleam awakened Timri Khan's eyes.

"Enchant? They would be enchanted?"

Mrs. Hervy King acquiesced energetically.

"Of course, prince! Everyone is crazy to see you."

"No, no, not so much as kazy," said Timri Khan apprehensively.

"You are quite too modest about your powers," said Mrs. Hervy King. "Your evening for the benefit of the Eye and Ear Hospital was brilliant! Such wonderful things you told everyone about himself! As for the flower trick, why, it sprang up in the pot before our eyes, and when the bird appeared in the air I never was more amazed in my life. You must have been delighted with the enthusiasm you created; and I happen to know that the hospital made a big sum."

Timri Khan drew his hand across his eyes and sighed a little unconscious sigh which, according to the young women who were Mrs. Hervy King's satellites, was perfectly fascinating.

"There were very many people," he said plaintively, "very many people."

"Yes, indeed, crowds," agreed Mrs. Hervy King, "and everyone was so amused!"

She suddenly felt far removed in

thought from the tall Oriental, who stood with his arms folded, looking into her conservatory, over the tops of palms that waved against a pale blue effect of artificial sky beyond. He was evidently not following her words. Inside the conservatory a young figure arose from a divan. It was Mrs. Hervy King's daughter Helena, and, according to Mrs. Hervy King's intimates, that lady's greatest disappointment; for Helena preferred study to society, and solitude to crowds, and the friendship of her father to a marriage with Berkeley Willis. If this last desire of Mrs. Hervy King were consummated—that lady confided to her friends—she felt that she would not have lived in vain.

As Timri Khan entered the conservatory Helena stood looking up at him, startled, her book in her hand, her simple white gown soft against the green, and rendered intangible by the dim effect of light. Timri Khan looked down and did not speak, and Mrs. Hervy King said:

"Prince, my daughter Helena. Why don't you read in the library, Helena? We are arranging for the reception tomorrow night."

"You are very good to come at all," said Helena King.

Timri Khan now looked startled. Unconsciously his hands crossed on his breast as he spoke to her.

"'Tis for the price they pay," said Timri Khan.

Helena smiled.

"Of course! But many people think that when another has power, and lets them share it—enjoy it, 'tis merely to amuse. One has to exercise all one's gifts. I saw you at Mrs. Bulling's and was—sorry for you."

Mrs. Hervy King had stepped aside to touch a spring which adjusted a shade and sent a sudden pale and purified ray of sunlight over Helena's white gown.

"I thank you," said Timri Khan. His long, brown finger lightly touched her book, and he held it up. It was "The Psychic in the Universal Law." His face changed so swiftly that it held

Helena's gaze for a moment; then he drew back discreetly.

"They do not onderstan'," he said gently.

"No, truly they do not understand." She spoke with such sympathetic comprehension that in the Oriental face something broke through its mask of rigid control and leaped to arms in an impassioned flash of Timri Khan's eyes; in a deep breath tense enough to make the veins blue at his temples, and his hands suddenly clinched as he leaned forward.

"I would mek them onderstan' once!"

Her eyes rested upon his as if her perception followed the boundary of his thought. Then she drew back, a little pale.

"I wonder that you do not," she said.

"What? What?" clamored her mother, returning. "Something delightfully unique, I am sure, prince!"

Timri Khan only bowed, and Helena left them.

When they returned to the drawing-room Timri Khan did not hesitate. He pointed to the green and gold cushions in the corner.

"I shall be there, but I shall do nothing," he said, and smiled. Mrs. Hervy King told someone afterward that Timri Khan's smile turned her cold, though why, she could not imagine. Now, as she failed to commit him to a more definite arrangement, she was forced to appear satisfied, and comforted herself by the knowledge that Timri Khan was sufficiently unusual and distinctive to prove a feature even if he did nothing at all.

Timri Khan paused in the great arched hall when a footman brought his fur coat, and again outside the massive doors of the Hervy King mansion. Everyone moved so quickly in this rapid country that it made his head swim perhaps. Out on the pavement stood an organ-grinder, filling the air with discordance, and on the marble baluster leaped and sprang a monkey. Its poor, grotesque little form was covered by a red skirt and

cap, and the footman at the door remarked amiably to Timri Khan:

"It's just a monkey, sir, doing its tricks."

"Ticks? Ah, yes, I onderstan'!" said Timri Khan, but he shivered as he went down the steps, and touched the monkey compassionately in passing.

The next night Timri Khan sat on many cushions in a corner of the Hervy King drawing-room, with his hands up his voluminous sleeves. He wore a turban and white, gold-embroidered shoes; a magnificent robe of old rose damask lined with pale blue, and caught at the breast by a yellow diamond of such unequaled size and splendor that even Mrs. Alexis Bulling, whose corsage jewels resembled a breastplate, could not keep from beyond the ray of its insistent gleam.

Mrs. Hervy King, nearby, passed everyone on to the corner, where Timri Khan sat supremely calm amid the chaos and clamor of unintelligible sound. To each she let fall some word aside, which drew that guest into confidence concerning the unique figure beyond.

"No, the prince receives alone in Oriental style! I arranged it. So much more consistent than the usual way."

"Helena is over there. She pursues all kinds of odd people and studies, and can make him understand easily—although he is exceedingly intelligent and his English quite perfect!"

"He is so fascinating! Yes, my dear, go right over to where Helena will present you to the prince."

"I have only learned today through the *Courier* that the prince is a poet of renown in his own country. Dr. Chenoweth has translated some of the poems and pronounces them exquisite!"—this to Miss Van Mack, an intellectual spinster.

Meanwhile Timri Khan was not so docile as Mrs. Hervy King had ordained. She had hung a dim lamp by massive chains above his head, and

under it his dreary, impenetrable face looked like that of a far-away god of the beautiful, caught and materialized for an hour of chastening and set down among mortal conditions alien and impossible.

Now, when the first guests arrived he arose to his great height, his hands crossed, and addressed Helena King.

"Make my obeisance to your mother. I cannot sit. It is not the fashion of your country."

The girl smiled up at at him and said:

"Do just as you will, I beg."

She had known he could not do it, he was so full of dignity, this young stranger, who seemed to be selling his birthright of power and mystery. He looked down strangely—at her clear, finely cut face, her gray eyes unsullied by a hint of subterfuge, at her simple and lovely lines—and sighed. It is possible that Timri Khan thought of the lotus that rises immaculate above the dark, indescribable slime below. Then he spoke with his eyes lowered, reverentially:

"You would not have me do them—ticks?"

"No!" said Helena bravely. "I knew how you felt that night at Mrs. Bulling's. You were so alone. I was—was sorry for you, prince."

He smiled now slowly, strangely.

"It meks no matter! 'Tis not sorrow for me, but for them," said Timri Khan. "For such thing is to them great—it is to them wonder. I could show them wonder—there is but one thing which holds wonder."

"And that?" breathed Helena eagerly.

"Truth," said Timri Khan. "Truth only. They do not spik truth, your people? Except yourself."

There was no rebuke, only questioning in the words.

"Oh, indeed, prince, you must not think that of us!" said Helena.

But he shook his head. "No, not the truth. They say, 'Oh, prince! Wish you do them—the ticks!' If they could, they would be ashem to do the ticks."

Helena laughed; but he did not smile.

"They say, 'I have a superb evening!' And outside your door they say, 'It was stupid, and the man he do no ticks!'"

"I have sometimes thought we ought to be compelled to live up to our protestations," said Helena. "What confusion it would create if people were forced to do so!"

"Live up—that is high?" he questioned.

"I mean I should like to see some of them have to do the things they say they will do," confessed Helena.

Timri Khan's brow cleared. "The things they say! Ah, I understand! 'Tis that you would see them do the things they say? You will see, they shall do them. Oh, yes, I would do more than that for you."

Helena interrupted to present Miss Craig, a girl in blue chiffon, who exclaimed at once:

"Oh, prince, I am crazy to read your poems! I simply cannot wait to get them, the extracts in today's paper were so charming! I intend to read nothing else this season, but to make a special study of them."

Timri Khan's hand slipped into his robe and he put in her own a little book, and motioned her back with a few murmured words. Miss Craig stared into his eyes and then disappeared in the crowd, her gaze fixed upon the book.

"Helena!" exclaimed a man who had approached meanwhile, "I have traveled night and day to reach here! All for your sake, of course. No other woman in the world could have drawn me East, yet——"

He paused, for Timri Khan's hand was touching his, Western fashion, and Timri Khan's eyes passed like the swiftness of a fine blade from his face to Helena's. A low laugh sounded at the man's elbow, and a woman said: "Well, Berkeley Willis, you did come, after all!"

Berkeley Willis wheeled about to face her whom Helena was presenting as Mrs. Wolcott Pray, and his lips moved beneath Timri Khan's gaze.

"No other woman could have drawn me East—I came for you."

Mrs. Wolcott Pray laughed uneasily.

"Really, if we did not know Berkeley's power of language we should believe the charming things he says!" she uttered, but her eyes shifted under Timri Khan's penetrating ones, and she laughed up at the Oriental.

"We are ready to obey your every command, prince, after the hour at Mrs. Bulling's."

Timri Khan bowed and murmured something to her. It sounded to Helena like "*Go home!*"

Then Mrs. Pray passed on with Berkeley Willis following blindly.

Alexis Bulling was pressing forward to speak to Timri Khan, thrusting a large hand forward as he spoke:

"By Jove, prince, I've been watching that diamond of yours! It's a winner! Why, I'd give a million for such a stone! Where did you—where did you——?"

He drew his hand over his brow, muttering: "A million! Why, of course, a million! I'd give a million for it, I say!"

Alexis Bulling fumbled in his pocket and brought out a stylographic pen and a cheque-book, and as the throng pushed by him he muttered:

"A million! I'm going to give a million for it."

Miss Van Mack was saying to Timri Khan:

"Prince, I am so deeply interested in your tricks from the point of view of a folklorist. I must give them especial study. The egg trick is particularly fascinating; I should like to devote all my time to it until I master it."

Timri Khan put something in her hand, and she was closed upon by the crowd and stood looking down upon an egg and a silk handkerchief which she held. Helena presented Mrs. Wilhelmina H. Green at the moment, explaining that Mrs. Green was a poet and author, and that lady proceeded to say:

"Prince, your poems are my mental

sustenance! I sleep with a copy under my pillow, and they are my waking incentive to the beauty of labor. I intend to make a special translation of your love poems and obtain the American copyright. I shall commence them before I sleep tonight."

Timri Khan murmured a few words to her and Mrs. Wilhelmina H. Green walked mechanically away, her lips moving and her gaze upon vacancy.

Helena presented her cousin, Fred Haller, who was saying to her:

"Make my peace with Aunt Vic, Helena. She wants me to stay to midnight supper, but I'm called out of town on business—awfully important! You know I'd rather be here than anywhere on earth, though, and would stay if I could."

Timri Khan's eyes were upon him, however, and he suddenly took his stand near Helena, repeating, "I'd rather be here than anywhere on earth!"

Mrs. Jack Ketchum, a pronounced blond, with a penetrating voice, was saying:

"Your mother wants me to stay to supper, Helena, but I must toddle home early. I'm crazy to stay, but must keep good hours tonight. So sorry"—she stopped abruptly, before a low murmur from Timri Khan, and a strange light glared in her eyes which were fixed upon him. Helena heard her say:

"I will not stay! We're going out to the Country Club in Fred Haller's car, and my husband thinks I'm going to be here. I won't stay!"

Timri Khan repeated his murmur and Mrs. Jack Ketchum's voice took another but still an obstinate note as she passed on, repeating:

"I'm going to stay here. I'm crazy to stay!"

Mrs. Bulling's red velvet was enveloping Timri Khan in its owner's enthusiasm.

"Prince, I never saw anything like that diamond of yours! The Koh-i-noor is a pebble beside it. Aren't you afraid it will be stolen?"

"It cannot be lost or stolen," said Timri Khan; "it is my birthright."

"How deliciously weird!" exclaimed Mrs. Bulling. "I would give my whole collection for such a jewel—every one of them!"

Timri Khan bowed with a murmur, and Mrs. Bulling suddenly began to unfasten her breastplate of jewels as she drew back, muttering:

"I'll give them all, every one!"

A girl was saying to Timri Khan:

"I suppose you grow accustomed to snakes in India, prince. I simply worship the snake as a symbol! The serpent is so adorably traditional and poetic."

Another, following closely, was assuring Timri Khan that if she could read poetry it would be his poems.

"I am so prosaic a creature, prince. I care only for settlement work, and schools for teaching housework and cooking. Really, the scientific method of cleaning a room has become to me the most fascinating employment in the world. I would rather be a day-worker than anything on earth!"

It was a little later in the evening when Mr. Hervy King made his way to his daughter's side. Mr. Hervy King had long ago accepted the attitude toward life tacitly presented him by his wife—the province to fulfil and not to demand; and perhaps had discovered that he who demands too little from life is no more prone to reap its compensation than he who demands too much. To have seen father and daughter together, no one would have deemed them alike, unless the introspective gaze of Timri Khan perceived in the eyes of both the same clear probing beneath the shams of civilization. Mr. Hervy King reached up, for he was a small man, and his daughter inclined her head so unobtrusively that no one noticed the conference.

"My dear, there is something strange going on." He spoke almost in agitation. "Nearly everyone is behaving in a manner unlike the ordinary, yet no one appears to observe it in the others. I would not like to think that any of the guests had been dining too freely."

Helena cast a rapid glance over the kaleidoscopic mass of color ahead of her, in which the individual was almost obliterated, and he continued:

"Mrs. Bulling has taken off all her jewels and declares that she will give them to Timri Khan. I heard her say it, my dear! The Bullings are not usually enthusiastic, but Alexis Bulling is in the library writing a cheque for a million, insisting that he has bought Timri Khan's diamond. Can you imagine Alexis Bulling parting with a million under any conditions? Your friend Dora Craig is usually charming and social, but she is in one corner devouring a book of Timri Khan's poems, and will not speak; and as for Mrs. Wilhelmina Green—my dear Helena, she is out on the steps writing madly on her knee—she says it is a translation of Timri Khan which must be done tonight."

Mr. Hervy King passed a trembling hand over his brow, repeating: "I really cannot understand it!"

Jared King, Helena's younger brother, came up breathlessly at the moment.

"Say, father, I'm afraid Miss Van Mack's gone mad or in a fit of some kind. She's flapping a handkerchief around telling everybody that there's nothing left for them but Timri Khan's bird trick, and—and everybody's awfully queer. I went to hunt Adela Gale and found her in the library dusting the chair legs—said Timri Khan told her to work. As for Berkeley Willis, he's an ass, and Mrs. Wolcott Pray made her husband take her home as soon as he came. Declared Timri Khan told her to go! What rot! Fred Haller's club supper is called off because he's sitting out there vowing he won't leave here tonight, and Jack Ketchum has called him out. Something rum's the matter with them all!"

Just here a footman entered hastily and spoke aside to Helena.

"I beg your pardon, miss, but Miss Carolyn Hope's kneeling in the conservatory mumbling before that stuffed snake of your father's. I'm afraid it's a fit, miss!"

Helena leaned toward Timri Khan with rebuke and laughter in her eyes.

"Prince, I think you have done your duty for tonight. No one else need be presented. Will you walk through the rooms with me?"

To Mrs. Hervy King's chagrin, Timri Khan did not remain for her midnight supper. Before leaving, he passed through the rooms and conservatory with Helena, and as he passed he left some word here and there with those to whom he had been presented. When he stood once more before Mrs. Hervy King that lady's diadem was wagging with triumph.

"My dear prince, you were quite right to refuse to do anything unusual tonight. You, yourself, were a sufficient feature. I have never seen such enthusiasm, and no tricks were needed."

Timri Khan bowed, his eyes absently upon Helena.

"No, I do no more ticks," he said.

Mr. Hervy King, following, stood beside his daughter, who looked wonderfully statue-like near Timri Khan's splendid patch of color.

"My dear Helena," he was saying, "I am sure I could not have been mistaken. I thought some of our guests behaved strangely tonight, but there is no sign of it now. I certainly saw Miss Van Mack apparently trying to catch a bird—a woman of such dignity, too! But, of course, my eyes are bad. At any rate, no one appears to have noticed it, and I told Jared to say nothing more about it. I saw Alexis Bulling put his cheque-book up when the prince spoke to him."

Timri Khan bade Helena good night with a deep look in her eyes and a sigh. Perhaps back of the sigh lay the inevitable memory of many saffron-faced lilies of his land of palm and lotus, who awaited his return; or he may have subdued an impulse to try his mastery upon this White Rose of the West. At any rate, he left a tiny object in her hand at parting. "A little memory," he called it, and with a low obeisance disappeared.

When the guests were gone Helena examined Timri Khan's gift. It was

an ivory egg, exquisitely carved, and on it inscribed in English:

Be as thou art,
Only the truth is wonder.
Be as thou art,
Only the truth is mystery.
Love not, saving where truth leads love.

Mrs. Hervy King was triumphant.

"When I told Timri Khan that a cheque would find him tomorrow he refused quite regally. He said that he was repaid by the honor of my daughter's society—and you know, Helena, he is actually a prince by blood! Of course he calls himself poor, but that diamond! He may be poor for over there"—this with a gesture toward an indefinite landscape—"but he is such a gentleman!"

Then Mr. Hervy King spoke, deprecatingly, it is true, but still he spoke:

"I call him a fine fellow, don't you, Helena? I couldn't help wondering if he had anything to do with the way

some of the people were cutting up. He may be one of those chaps who take mysterious degrees in the Himalayas and propel their astral souls around and make them do half the work. A very good arrangement, I should think, and saving of strength."

"Yes, he is wonderful," said Helena, her eyes upon the inscription on the egg.

"I never saw such enthusiasm," repeated her mother, "though what your poor father means by people cutting up I can't imagine! I'm sure I never had such delightful things said to me about an evening—nor has Timri Khan, probably. Well, Helena, I asked him to dinner for tomorrow night."

"He will not come," said Helena, looking beyond them to where the palms made a dreamy background in the conservatory. "We shall never hear of him again."

And they never did.



A HISTORICAL INACCURACY

CLEOPATRA observed, "That false tale
Of the asp many ears may regale—
What a fuss they all make
About that poor snake!
Why, the poison was sent me by mail."

CAROLYN WELLS.



A SCROOGE

SENIOR PARTNER—We had best have that young bookkeeper's books examined. He took twelve drinks between here and home yesterday.

JUNIOR PARTNER—How do you know?

"I was with him. He was treating me."

THROUGH THE VEIL

ALWAYS it seems
 That only a thin veil—
 Sheer as the music of a nightingale—
 Trembles and streams
 Between me and the mystery of dreams.

Sometimes at dawn
 I am so very near
 I feel its high ecstatic atmosphere,
 And then—'tis gone!
 A breath stirs, and the wonder is withdrawn.

Sometimes a bird
 Sings at the twilight close,
 Or there is borne to me the scent of a rose;
 And I have heard
 But cannot speak the unapparent word.

Sometimes the breeze
 Passes over my hair
 Like the hand of Something—and I turn and stare;
 And my soul sees
 A movement in the sensitive willow trees.

But oftener,
 When I am very still,
 Deep in my heart I feel a curious thrill;
 A messenger
 From the Unseen signals and would confer.

Some day, I know,
 That Presence will appear—
 Too high to reach, too beautiful to fear!
 My songs I owe
 To a strange sign it made me long ago.

ELSA BARKER.



CHICAGO

“WAS the wedding well attended?”
 “Indeed, yes. All the bride’s former husbands were there.”

SIX POPULAR NOVELS A DAY

HOW SHE READS THEM

By Collin Davis

THE Crescent golf-links were—
(Seven pages of golf-link scenery, *skipped*.)

"—," he said, lifting his hat.

"—," she answered, with a smile.

"—," he said.

"—," she said.

"—," he insisted, as he handed her his brassie.

"—," she replied, as she took it.

Away sped the ball.

(Two pages about the game, *skipped*.)

"—?" he asked, as he helped her into her trap.

"—," she replied, telling him she would be at home at eight as she drove away.

Gertrude leaned back and summed him up as the crimson sunset—

(Seven pages of Gertrude's thoughts judiciously mixed with the crimson sunset, *skipped*.)

Hilding Henderson graduated from Harvard, class of—

(Sixteen pages of Hilding's life—unimportant—skimmed.)

"—," he said, lifting his hat.

"—," she replied, making room for him on the narrow stair-rug.

"Isn't the heat oppressive—?"

(Two pages of weather, *skipped*.)

"—," she said, taking the rose from her golden hair.

(One-half page on "golden hair," *skipped*.)

"—," he answered, drinking in the fragrance of the rose.

"—?" he rather boldly inquired.

"—," she diplomatically answered.

The moon flung its splinters of silver light through the branches of—

(Four pages about the moon, hastily turned.)

"—," he said, taking her hand.

"—," she said, attempting to draw it away from his strong fingers.

"Grandmama, this is Mr. Hilding Henderson you have heard me speak of—"

(Eleven pages of grandmama—skipped in anger.)

"—," she coyly said, as grandmama went into the house.

"—," he said, with a boyish laugh.

"—," she said, looking into the moonlight.

"—," he answered earnestly.

Gertrude had met many men during her past two seasons, but this boy, with his guileless brown eyes, looking into hers—

(One page on eyes, carefully read. Five pages of Gertrude's past admirers, *skipped*.)

"—?" he asked, pressing her hand as it rested on the gate.

"—," she answered, looking straight into his eyes and feeling her new power.

"—," and he was gone.

Gertrude stood before her glass as her maid—

(Eight pages before Gertrude goes to bed, *skipped*.)

Hilding lighted his pipe as he sat on the hotel veranda and thought—

(His thoughts cover nine pages—skimmed.)

The joyous summer fled too soon, and the autumn swiftly—

(Five pages of summer and autumn;

get the same thing in an almanac, condensed; *skipped*.)

Mrs. Murray Hill's reception——

(Six pages, plenty of "he says" and "she says," but tiresome; *skipped*.)

"——?" he asked, as Mrs. Murray Hill left them.

"——," she answered, as they passed into the dark conservatory.

"——," he said.

"——," she replied.

"——?" he asked.

She did not answer.

"——?" he begged.

Still she did not answer.

"——!" he implored.

"——," she at last said dreamily.

"——?" he asked, his eyes aflame with love.

Once more she was silent.

"——?" he begged, his lips very close to hers.

(One very exciting page of kisses, more kisses, squeezes, hugs, still more kisses, heart-throbs, etc.)

Time—fifty-two minutes.



THE PAST

I WENT into a shadowy land
 Seeking Myself.
 I met and seized one by the hand—
 "Thou art Myself.

"Thou hast my hair, my lips, my eyes,
 The look I wore."
 She answered in disdainful wise,
 "Thyself, no more.

"Strange ways you go, strange cups you drink,
 Withheld from me.
 Mysterious are the thoughts you think—
 I know not thee."

So she that was Myself withdrew
 Into the night;
 Coldly the fog-wind rose and blew,
 And blurred my sight.

FLORENCE WILKINSON.



THE BIG EVENT

PENDALLY—Writing poems is a mere incident of my life.

FRIEND—Ah! And——

"But getting paid for one is nothing less than a great crisis."

HER ANSWER

By John Earl

THERE were women in pink that would have shamed a rose petal, women in green, like sea nymphs, women in gauzy clouds of blue, women in drifts of lavender and lace, women in black that served, as it was intended, to make more dazzling the sheen of diamonds and perfect necks. All the women of social prominence in the city were to be seen that night in the splendid ballroom, their charms reflected in the mirrors, glimpsed elusively among the palms and orchids, displayed in the whirl beneath the central canopy of lights to the music of the Venetian band—for Mrs. de Costro's ball was one of the events of the season from which no woman of social prominence should be missed. There were the belles of that season and the belles of seasons past, but the figure among them all that the eyes of the knots of onlookers followed oftenest was that of a tall woman in white who stood surrounded always by a throng of men or moved like a wraith among the dancers.

"There she is," was the whispered comment that could be heard to pass from lip to lip. "That's Céleste du Bois! Mrs. de Costro's heir!"

Everybody knew her history. It was the wonderful beauty of this girl alone that had made her Mrs. de Costro's protégée and had opened to her the door of the inner circle, for she had no other fortune and her family was obscure. She was said to have worked in a factory as a neglected little child. But she had knocked at the door of society when she came into the conquering glory of her womanhood, and the inner circle had bowed down. Her lack of family and fortune was a

favorite topic of discussion among many of the fair sex, although never in her presence nor in Mrs. de Costro's. The eyes of the men, however, had followed her ever since she came among them as they followed her that night—her head, whose gold no artifice could imitate, moving amid the galaxy like a star of greater magnitude; her eyes, darkly blue and filled with the light that drew men to her, resting on them as she passed them with an indifference that drove them mad. The sons of magnates had courted her, but it was said that Céleste du Bois had never cared for any man. She was known as "*la belle dame sans cœur*."

Among the throng of those who watched her there was one man, however, who thought that she was not indifferent to him. This was the young and handsome Baron Mechlenberg, who was leaning against one of the pillars wreathed with smilax, twirling a rosebud in his hand. He had spoken, on the evening before, as he bent over her, promenading in the foyer at the opera, and, although she had not said yea, neither had she said him nay. Rumor had it that Céleste du Bois had never before been at a loss for a reply. And her manner, which invariably betokened an unmoved composure, was perturbed. He made his way, when the dance was over, to a little alcove into which he had seen that she and her partner had withdrawn. Her partner had left her for a moment to get her an ice. He waited until the young man had disappeared and took his place beside her.

"I am to have your answer tonight, Céleste?" he said.

She looked down like any nervous

debutante and closed and unclosed her fan.

"I will give it to you," she replied at last, "after we have had our dance. I dance with you—the sixth, is it not? Until then do not look for me again."

When the time for the sixth dance arrived he came to claim her.

"Whither?" he whispered, his eyes roaming over and beyond the brilliant throng that was gathering at the first strains of the waltz to the conservatory, whose lanterns twinkled distantly through the green. But she laid her hand on his arm.

"We will dance first," she said. Her glance rested on him oddly for a moment as they whirled into the maze.

She leaned dreamily on the young baron's arm, appearing, as they floated in and out among the others, to have abandoned herself utterly to the intoxication of the waltz; looking up at him, her glorious head tipped back, through half-veiled eyes. When it was over she suffered him, with a sigh, as though reluctant, to lead her from the room.

"Before I answer you," she said, when they found themselves alone, "there is something that I want to ask you. You must not say anything until after I have finished. My answer will depend on yours."

The conservatory was deserted except for themselves. The lights and figures in the ballroom beyond them could be seen dimly through the green. Dark leaves and great clusters of azalea shut in the little rockery in which they sat, and ferns and sprays of flowering jasmine, transparent in the light from the lanterns that were half concealed among the foliage, hung like a ghostly curtain overhead. Céleste du Bois, on the rockery seat, her white figure outlined against the green, seemed to the man beside her, in her surpassing beauty, like the nymph of the place. And yet, as in the alcove and throughout the dance, there was something about her that perturbed him.

"You must promise not to interrupt me," she said.

Her gravity, the tremor of her

voice, disturbed him further, but he still twirled the rosebud, acquiescing, and still smiled. It was a moment or two before she spoke.

"Before I ask my question," she went on finally, steadying her tones, "I want to tell you something of my life. About the part of it about which everybody knows—and does not know." She reached up and broke a spray of jasmine and drew it back and forth between her hands.

"I was a poor little child," she said. "I came from poor people—miserable people, although the blood back of them was good. My father drank and my mother died. I worked, from the time that I was six until I was sixteen, in a factory, as all the women love to tell each other, although they do not speak of it to me. There is much more that I will tell them if they ask me. Before I went into the factory I carried my father's pail, and the pails of the men who drank with him, to the saloon for beer. If I did not get it back in time to please them I was cursed and struck." She lifted a curl from her white forehead and let him see a scar. "That," she said, "is my father's mark. But that is not the deepest mark that was left upon me when I was a child. My heart was branded with hate and fear. I was afraid of the men who drank with my father and were always with him. I was afraid of the men in the saloon who laughed and jeered at me when I came in with my pail. I was afraid of the men in the street. It was the good blood in me that made me run away and hide. I was afraid of the men in the factory when I went to work there. I came to know well what men were in those days. They hunted me because of my eyes and hair and skin. They have been hunting me, and I have been hiding from them all my life."

The seventh dance was beginning, and the music came in to them through the leaves. Céleste du Bois pulled the petals from the flowers on the spray of jasmine she held.

"After I came to know Mrs. de

Costro," she continued, "after, she had taught me and spent her money on me, that I might be made ready, I came to know what men were—here."

She paused, and Baron Mechlenberg broke the stem of his rose into little pieces and dropped them on the floor. His handsome face no longer smiled. The silence between them was filled with the rhythm of the dancing feet.

"I have not found them," she said, "any better. They wear fine clothes and talk with cultivated voices, but they are the same. They are whispering to the women who are dancing with them, now, what they have just been whispering to me. They say that I am heartless. It is they who have no heart. They look at me only for my beauty, and for Mrs. de Costro's money, which they know that some day I will have. If Mrs. de Costro should disown me, if I should cease to be beautiful, if sickness should take away the color of my hair and skin, or an accident disfigure me, I should be a cast-off thing. I should be merely the girl without a family, who had worked in a factory. They do not care for *me*."

The glow on her cheeks could be seen even in the shaded light. She brushed the petals of the jasmine from her lap and turned passionately to the man beside her. "No one has ever cared for me," she cried, leaning toward him. "And you? How do I know that you are any better than the others? How do I know that you are one to whom a woman who has suffered as I have suffered, who has longed for happiness as I have done, would dare intrust her hope of it? I have known you in the ballroom, in the drawing-room, which is not to know you in the least. You say that you love me, you worship me. So do the rest. Are you any worthier of a woman's love than they? What will you do for love of me? What will you suffer? What will you give up?"

"Oh," she said, "I have been cold and hungry. I have starved. But I was never colder nor hungrier in my attic"—she stretched out her arms

glittering with diamonds—"than I am in these. My soul is starving for someone to whom to pin its faith!" She caught her breath, sobbing, and grasped him by the hands. "I love you," she said. "I love you; I have never cared for any other man. But do you"—her eyes, looking into his, were not those of the courted beauty, but of the piteous little child—"do you, knowing all that I have told you, knowing yourself, do you advise me to marry *you*?"

The man looking back at her heard his own words as though someone else were speaking. "No," he said. "I do not. I do not!" No one else would have recognized the voice as that of Baron Mechlenberg. "I am no better," he said, "than the others." He drew his hands from her and put them before his face.

On the other side of the little bower of plants the music and the dancing still went on. More than one of those whose names were on the card that lay, forgotten, at her feet had been looking vainly for Céleste du Bois. He who sat beside her with bowed head at last raised his face, and she could see that it had been wet with tears. He lifted a fold of her white scarf and touched it to his lips.

"Shall we go," he asked, "and find your partner? We must not stay here any longer."

He rose and stood looking down at her from over his folded arms, in the anguish and surprise and, like a strange new thrill, the glory of having found that he loved another better than he loved himself.

"I shall leave the city," he said, "in the morning. I cannot stay where I shall see you. I shall not see you alone again before I go. Good-bye!"

Céleste du Bois had risen also. The diamonds sparkled on her arms, her bosom, in her hair. Never had she seemed to the man before her so wonderful. He regarded her intently, as though to fix her image on his mind. She stood with eyes averted, toying with the leaves.

"Are you not going to wait," she

said, "to let me thank you for what you have done?"

"Is there any need?" he cried with bitterness; but she held up a detaining hand.

"There is something that I wish to say," she said, "before we go." She looked up and he saw what she had hidden from him, the light in her eyes.

"You have said," she went on, "that you are no better than the others. You may not have been, perhaps. I do not know what you may have been, but though you never were before, you are tonight better than the others. You are the only man whom I have known whom I have found capable of faith."

She stood before him in the soft

light, regarding him with head held high. The music and the murmur of the throng outside seemed to him suddenly to have receded far away.

"I was afraid," she said, "to weigh you in the balance, but I have not found you wanting. I asked you what you would give up for me, and you have shown me that you cared enough for me to give up self!"

She took a step toward him. The leaves and the lanterns swam in a blur before the young baron's eyes. No man, among those who knew Céleste du Bois, had ever seen that expression on her face.

"I told you," she said, "that my answer would depend on yours—and it is yes."



FEMININITY

DE STYLE—Was she surprised when you told her there was a price upon her head?

DETECTIVE—Yes; she asked me if it was on straight.



THOUGHTFUL ETHEL

"ETHEL is saving something for a rainy day."

"An umbrella?"

"No; a pretty pair of new hose."



STRAWS invariably show which way the wind blows, even after having been made up into a man's hat.